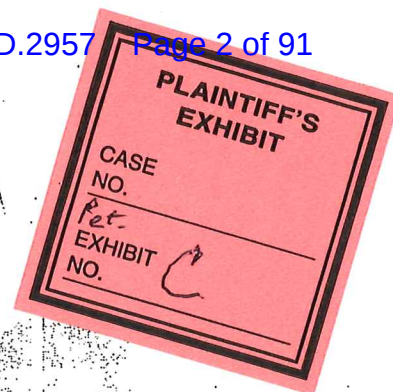


EXHIBIT C

Statement of Linda Stermer



Kerby, Bailey and Associates



KB&A Case: 07-1262
Client: (2388) Farm Bureau Insurance
Interviewer: James Shinsky (J)
Interviewee: Linda Stermer (L)
Interview Date: January 9 and 10, 2007

Also present: Kim LaPorte (KL), Jeff Gagie (G), Kim Swift (KS),

J. Okay, this is a recorded statement with the insured. KBA case number is 07-1262. Today's date is Tuesday, 1/9 of 07. It's about 12:49 p.m. And we are at the home location. Let me set that there... (inaudible) ... do is just speak good, clear English. In the car with me I have the owner of the property. And I have it as Linda Stermer, S-T-R-M-E-R.

L. S-T-E-R-M-E-R.

J. S ... Oh, okay. S-T-E-R-M-E-R. Do you have a middle name?

L. Kay, K-A-Y.

J. And what is your date of birth, Linda?

L. 11/16/64.

J. And the home address is 66598 County Road 215?

L. Correct.

J. And what's the best phone number to use to get a hold of you?

L. 269-539-0219.

J. And this is Lawrence mailing.

L. Correct.

J. 49 ...

L. 064.

J. 064.

JAN 22 2007

L. And we have a P.O. box.

J. P.O. box?

L. 673.

J. And what township are you in here?

L. Lawrence ... (inaudible)

J. Oh, it is Lawrence Township? And we're in VanBuren County.

L. Yes.

J. And your husband's name is Todd.

L. Joseph Stermer.

J. Joseph? And what's his date of birth?

L. 11/22/64.

J. And then you have your girlfriend with you.

L. No, my sister.

J. Oh, it's your sister. That's right. And what is your name, ma'am?

KL. Kim.

J. Is it ...

KL. LaPorte. L-A, capital P-O-R-T-E.

J. And that's a sister. And I have, that phone number that I have is a good phone number for you?

KL. Yes.

J. The one they gave me?

KL. Yeah.

J. And what is your name, sir?

- G. Jeff. The last name is Gagy. G-A-G-I-E. And my phone number in Paw Paw is 655-1118.
- J. 18, okay. And I have your TX. Who normally lives in the house here with ya, Linda?
- L. My husband, myself, and our three sons.
- J. And what are your sons' names?
- L. Trenton. Do you need last names also?
- J. Ah ha.
- L. Stermer. Trevor, T-R-E-V-O-R, Stermer, and Cory, C-O-R-Y, Pierce, P-I-E-R-C-E.
- J. And how old is Trenton?
- L. Thirteen, fifteen, seventeen.
- J. And the first question might sound a little strange, but it's kind of a qualifier, is that are you under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any condition that may affect you answering questions?
- L. I've taken a Xanax.
- J. But you don't think that will affect your answering questions?
- L. I don't think so.
- J. You're able to think and function okay? Basically, if you could, what I'll have you do is go through the events of the day leading up to the fire, the fire, and if you kind of explain what went on, that'll answer probably half of the questions that I have in my questionnaire. And then I have the fire, the, actually, the date of the fire was on Sunday?
- L. Hmm mm.
- J. And that's January the 7th. About what time?
- L. Mm, it was after three sometime.
- J. And that's pm?
- L. Yes.

J. Okay. Go ahead. If you wanna just, with Sunday morning, or what was going on?

L. Um, Sunday morning, I had got up and, um, went down to the, um, Marathon and gotten some eggs and some breakfast meat, and stuff to cook that morning. Um, filled up the Blazer. And then came home, started coffee. And, um, Todd was still in bed at that point. Um ... he got up and, um, I gave him the receipts for his medicines, prescriptions, and, ah, the last couple days' receipts that I had spent. And he got very angry with me 'cause I hadn't recorded them in his checkbook and, um, told him about 'em sooner. And, ah, he was screaming at me about that and, um, ... I, um, went downstairs and woke the boys up. I think this is probably around ten maybe. And, um, told the boys that they could go to the mall and I'd give 'em some money for lunch or breakfast if they wanted, and that Dad and I needed to talk about some things. Um ... I went back upstairs. Um ... I don't remember if I started a load of laundry then or if it was a little bit later, but I went back upstairs and I made Todd some breakfast. And, um, told him I was gonna send the boys to the mall. And, um, then we could talk about everything. Um, I was gonna be going to my sister's to stay for a little bit. And, um, so I made him his breakfast, and he took his medicines, and we didn't really discuss all that much more. And he sat down and watched some huntin' program in the living room, and ... I did some laundry and some dishes, and ... um, came back upstairs and had to read the instruction booklet for ... my son is on a special prescription that you have to enroll on the computer and answer questions and that, I guess, monthly, so we were gonna go get his blood work done on Monday, so wanted to get all the computer end of it done on Sunday, and I must've fallen asleep. I was laying on our bed, reading the book, and I took a little nap. And when I got up, um ... Todd had asked me for something to drink. I went in the kitchen and was loading the dishwasher, and, um, washing up his breakfast dishes and, and, um, I got him some juice. And he took some more medication. And, um ... told him I was going downstairs to do some laundry. There was a towel in the laundry that smelt like fuel or gas or ... so I ran that through. Um, so I restarted the laundry then, 'cause it still smelled, so I restarted it. And, um ... Todd was yelling at me, and then all of a sudden, I heard him scream. Then I went running up the stairs and ... there was fire from our bedroom to his recliner, and he was on fire. And his whole upper body and ... there was fire and smoke, and I couldn't see him really well, and I just turned and ran out the door. And jumped in the van, 'cause I didn't know how I would get anybody except I would go over to Mike and Connie's. And I backed up, and then I seen Todd in the yard, and I got out to try and help him get the fire off of him. Ah, before that, I heard a, something in the house, a, a boom.

J. Now in the morning, you ran and got breakfast stuff about what time? Do you remember, do you recall what time that was?

L. Around nine or so.

J. And then when you say you ran to the Marathon, where's the Marathon located at?

L. In, in Lawrence.

J. In Lawrence? Everybody has their local stops, and we cover so much area, that it's like, "Okay, now where's the Marathon?" And then filled up the truck; you were back home here. Now you're saying that Todd was taking medication. It looks like he, by the sound of it, had taken meds a couple of times. What type of medication is he taking?

L. Um ...

J. I mean what, what kind of issues is he ...

L. He had, ah, some kind of a ear infection going on. Um, he said that the doctor said that he was really swollen and draining really terrible, and he was feeling sick to his stomach a lot from that, and ... Here's here to get the little, the ...

J. Oh.

L. *[to unknown party]* The, the two tires with the blue.

U. The two tires with the blue?

J. Yup.

U. Alright.

J. So he had stuff for his ear infection?

L. Hmm mm.

J. I don't know if my pencil's gonna work or not.

L. Do you want a pen?

J. Oh here, I've got another one. I just have to dig inside the overalls to get it. Now when you say he got angry over you not recording the prescription purchase and stuff, is he the one that normally runs, controls the money? He's got you on a little bit of a tight rope?

L. Yeah, I give him my paycheck.

J. Oh. Now you say he was angry, I mean was he just yelling, grumbling, or was he ...

L. He was screaming. Um, we'd been arguing quite a bit, and, you know, we were arguing over me leaving to go to my sister's, and ...

J. And this is just some other thing to trip another argument?

L. Just one more straw.

J. Now you say you went down to get the boys up. I think you said that was around ten.

L. Yeah.

J. And then all three boys were here?

L. Hmm mm.

J. And then did they ultimately get up and leave?

L. Yeah. I told them that, you know, we were gonna be talking about a lot of things today. And I told them that they were going to stay here and go to school, and I was gonna go to Aunt Kim's. And I told them that later on in the day, they would have to meet me so that I could get the Blazer from them. And I told them I wasn't sure if I would be at Aunt Kim's when they left yet or not, and just to ... we would talk and figure out where they were supposed to meet me to bring the Blazer to me, and then I'd bring 'em home.

J. Do you normally drive the Blazer?

L. Yeah.

J. Now do the boys have cell phones for you to get in touch with them?

L. Hmm mm.

J. Silly question. Every kid has a cell phone.

L. Just about, huh?

J. Yeah.

L. And they know how to use it better than we do.

J. Oh that's no lie. We were at a staff meeting and one of our guys got a new phone and couldn't figure out how to get it to program. I said, "I can fix that." So I dialed up my daughter and said, "Here, tell her what you want to do." Yeah. And she completely understood. And about what time was it that the boys left?

L. Oh, I don't know, maybe eleven or so.

J. And then after getting the boys up, they woke up, came up, did you cook breakfast?

L. No, I told them that I would give 'em some money to go out to eat, because I just, I didn't know how much arguing or yelling Todd was gonna wanna do, and I don't like to in front of the boys. And he doesn't mind, so I just asked them if they would just go and I would let Dad know that they were going, and ...

J. Whoop, there's your ... (inaudible)

U. We're gonna go to the tire store.

L. Okay. Where are you going?

U. (unintelligible)

L. Okay. Well ... (inaudible)

U. Huh?

L. Okay. Well, how much did they say?

U. Um, 160.

L. And they're gonna match those up ...

U. Yup.

L. ... so that there won't be any problem if they can't match 'em up then?

U. No, Kate already called 'em; they have the tires and everything.

L. Okay. It's four-wheel-drive ...

U. Yup.

L. ... and you got to match 'em just right.

U. (unintelligible)

L. Love you.

U. Love you, too.

L. Britney! Do you have any, can you, could you get a bucket and a pan with some water for Vegas? Please. Drive out there and get it for him?

L. The farm pig.

J. Pardon me?

L. The farm pig.

J. Oh.

L. He's over there.

J. Oh. He's friendly? He's not gonna bite everybody? He's no ...

L. Trenton taught him how to ...

J. ... the watch pig?

L. ... sit for treats. He sits down for a treat.

J. And he's the, the neighborhood watch pig.

L. Something like that.

G. Looks like he's had a couple of treats.

L. Yeah, a few. Trenton got a bottle of our, um, pancake syrup and held it up in the air and poured it in his mouth to teach him how to, how to sit. Todd, he didn't want him here at first 'cause he would root up the yard. And we took him in for a friend who lived in the city and he was tearing up the neighbors' flowerbeds. So Todd said, "You either get him figured out how to make him stop tearing up the yard or he's gotta go." So we got his nose pierced and he never tore up anything after that. And Todd made him quite the little palace down there at the shed.

J. Okay, now the boys left. Did you ultimately cook breakfast for you and Todd?

L. Um, just for Todd. I, my stomach was just in knots, so I didn't eat.

J. And about what time was that?

L. Maybe around ten, I think.

J. So basically, Todd was up as the boys were leaving and ...

L. Yeah. They didn't come up and talk to Todd, 'cause he was all angry and ...

J. Now is that, would that be normal for him this, lately, to be angry and the kids kind of avoiding him?

L. Well he's been ... Yeah.

J. How long has this been going on?

L. Well ... I don't know, for ... This summer, it, it was a lot, and then it kind of tapered off, and then this winter, it's been quite a bit.

J. Now does he take his anger out like this on the boys, too?

L. No.

J. It's just basically you? And you're trying to protect them and have them not here?

L. Yeah. I just don't like 'em to hear all the stuff that he screams, and ... You know, and it used to be where he would just yell at me when the boys weren't here, but he didn't seem to care much who was here anymore.

J. Now was Todd aware that you were gonna go to your sister's and stay?

L. We talked about that Saturday.

J. And it's basically you just getting away from him? What was his reaction on Saturday?

L. Um, well he had a few different reactions. He, he, um, wanted to make sure I wasn't gonna take the boys. And I told him that there was no way I could, 'cause, you know, they had to stay in school. And, you know, I wasn't gonna uproot everybody because, you know ... move 'em all into my sister's; there would be just too much.

J. Now have you guys been talking about a divorce? Or is it just ...

L. For the last couple years really.

J. And it's ...

L. And a couple months ago, I had made up my mind for sure that I was going to. And had paperwork and had it all filled up, and I had already showed it to him, and....

J. And what was his reaction then?

L. Um, he told me to take the Blazer and go, and get the ... couple expletives out, and ... And then he told me that we could work things out; um, he could change if I could change, and ...

J. Now has he always been this angry and violent? Or is this something that's new?

L. Yeah. No, he's always been. And it just kind of comes and goes in waves, I guess.

J. Now is he a drinker?

L. (inaudible)

J. I mean is he, when he, does he drink and then get angry? Or ...

L. Um, he used to. But he's just been more just taking, um, his prescription medicines, my sleeping pills, muscle relaxants, pain pills, a lot of different things lately.

G. Go ahead and tell him about his recreational stuff with his buddy.

L. He had been smoking pot, too.

J. Is that something fairly recent?

L. He used to do it ...

J. Or at least you found out recently?

L. Well, he used to do it, and, um, he had quit for quite a long time. And, um, he and his buddy got together, and, um, I found out because I had asked him about this job, going to get this job, um, because his business just wasn't paying the bills and he just wasn't working regularly at all. He would sit around and mope around, and ... And, um, he told me he couldn't go and apply for the job just yet. And I asked him why, and he told me because he had smoked some pot, and he had to wait until it was out of his system. Because he was sure with a job like that that they were gonna wanna test him, and, ah ...

J. And what kind of business was he in?

L. He sells gloves and, to different businesses. He's a wholesaler. And he just, he wouldn't go out and work every day.

J. One of those where he has, had to make contacts to people?

L. Yup.

J. And if you don't go see 'em, they don't buy anything? Let's see, we keep, we get off a little bit. That's fine; it fills in all of the details. Now, so you told him that, basically, on Saturday, had discussed about going to stay at your sister's. Did you end up with any fighting? I mean, has he ever hit you? Has he ever beaten you? To where, or, you know, have you got prior domestic violence complaints filed?

L. (inaudible)

J. Basically it was one of those you just took the beating and didn't say anything?

L. (inaudible)

J. You have to answer yes or no.

L. Yes.

J. Yeah. I know, I know, I realize this is difficult, but gathering all of the information ... You know, my primary role is to determine what caused the fire, and the events of the day. And obviously, there's been a lot going on that you've been putting up with for quite a while. But you never, you've never called the police on him for hitting you?

L. My friend called the police a few weeks ago, like around Thanksgiving time. But see, we lived in Portage, and somebody had called the police back then, and when we were sitting down with the police officers individually, I was making a report of what had happened, and he came out with the male police officer and he told me I had a lot to think about. He said that he wasn't gonna go to jail by himself, that we would both go. And I asked him why. And the police officer said, "Well your husband said that, um, you hit him also. And so we have to take you both in." And, um, so they explained it all to me, and I didn't wanna go to jail and have the kids, you know, go through all that. So I didn't finish the report, and I've never made a complaint against him since then, because of that.

J. Now the friend, you say a friend of yours called back about Thanksgiving?

L. Yeah. And ...

J. Was that this past Thanksgiving?

L. Yeah.

J. Is that while you were living here?

L. Yes.

J. And that'd have been a call to the sheriff's department, or ...

L. Yeah. Um, and he, um, told me how things would happen. And so I told them that nothing happened, that we were just arguing.

J. So they actually, the police department actually did come out. Now the incident in Portage, how long ago was that?

L. Mm, about twelve years ago.

J. Oh, okay. So it was quite a while ago.

L. Yeah.

J. How long have you guys been married?

L. Thirteen years.

J. And how long together before that?

L. Um, we met in '89. November, right before my birthday.

J. And now, he took his medications and then began watching hunting programs. About what time was that? Was that all around that ten, eleven, with get up and the kids left?

L. Yeah.

J. And then from there, you went down to do some laundry.

L. Yes.

J. How many loads of laundry? I mean were you, about how long were you downstairs?

L. I folded laundry. I was putting Christmas ornaments in the boxes. We have a pool table in the basement, and I had all the boxes laid out and was just puttering.

J. Basically staying away from him?

L. Yeah. We did that a lot.

J. And then about what time would you say you were back upstairs, when you were gonna do the, read the instructions on your son's medication?

L. Maybe around noon or so.

J. And then you said you think you were reading the book?

L. Um, it's a folder-type of pamphlet of information on ... it's, um, I Pledge, it's called, for acne medication. Cause it's a really harmful drug if you don't do everything just right, and ...

J. And then you dozed off, and about what time did you get up?

L. I really don't know. Um ...

J. Now did you just wake up on your own? Or did you wake up because he was yelling?

L. No, I remember hearing him down in the basement doing something. And when I got up though, he was back in his recliner, in the living room, upstairs. And he had asked me for something to drink when I had gotten up. And so I went in and got him something to drink. And did some dishes and ...
(inaudible)

L. *(answering phone)* May I call you back please, Ken? Okay. We're here at the farm right now. Yeah. Um, we have the, um ...

J. Fire investigator.

L. Fire investigator here. I'm sorry.

J. Another one on the list.

L. Right now. We're meeting with him and then in, um, in a little bit, I've gotta leave to get to the funeral home. Oh my goodness. Can, can I, um, can I come over later on this afternoon? And I'd like to see the dogs, too. Okay. Thank you. I'll call you. Okay. Thank you.

J. Now when you say you heard him in ...

L. (inaudible)

J. Whoops. When you heard him in the basement, I mean, was it banging? I mean, how did you know he was in the basement doing something? What kind of noises? I mean, do you have any idea what he was doing down there?

L. No. Um, like, I know he was at the fireplace downstairs because I heard the, um, screen.

J. Hmm mm.

L. And ... Oh, and when I came back upstairs, when I got him the juice too, um, I had made a fire for him then too, in the fireplace. He said, "Today would be a good day to have a fire in the fireplace." So ...

J. Now ...

L. ... I made a fire in the upstairs fireplace.

J. Okay. Now when you say upstairs, is that ...

L. The main floor.

J. This level here is upstairs? And then when you say you heard him downstairs, that would ...

L. We had a fire, um, place downstairs also.

J. In the basement?

L. But we kept all the wood downstairs.

J. Okay. But that, like I said, there was a basement, a fireplace on the basement walkout level?

L. Yes.

J. And upstairs?

L. And upstairs.

J. Okay. 'Cause I'm not, I'm not familiar with the whole layout.

L. I'm sorry.

J. Yeah. Well, and like I said, and that's, but that's filling in the blanks. So there was, was there a fire going downstairs?

L. No.

J. Okay. There was fire ...

L. (unintelligible)

KL. (unintelligible)

L. Um, he had wood upstairs and a fire log. And, um ... the fireplace tools were up here.

J. And then he said it'd be a good day for a fire.

L. Hmm mm.

J. Is there any reason he didn't build the fire?

L. No. He just asked me to. Sometimes he'd ask me to, sometimes he'd ask the boys to. You know, I mean ... My sons were pretty good at making a fire. He taught 'em how to make a pretty good fire in the fireplace, too.

KL. (unintelligible)

L. Mm mm.

J. Yeah, you'll end up with people stopping by, wondering if they can do estimates for tear-down and rebuilding, and if you need to hire any help.

L. Oh.

J. And ...

L. Yeah, I think that's Joe Tetra, who owns the sawmill.

J. Yeah, that's, they'll be ... you'll be tired of people stopping by.

KL. (inaudible)

J. Yeah, if you aren't already, if ...

L. Why are they just walking around there?

KL. (inaudible)

J. Just looking. And then, from there, you were talking about that you went up, that Todd had asked for something to drink.

L. Hmm mm.

J. Is there any reason he can't get up and get a drink himself?

L. Sometimes he was, um, pretty groggy from the medication. Um, and his stomach had been upset, and ... And that's just Todd. I mean, when somebody else is here, somebody else gets stuff for him.

J. Now this medication he's taking for his ear infection, is that some kind of antibiotics or something?

L. There was a inhaler, there was a liquid, and there was a, a pill. And I don't ... he told me that, um ... he told me that the liquid was the antibiotic, but when I got to the pharmacy, they didn't have any at Rite Aid in Paw Paw. And they wouldn't be able to fill it for a few days. And I asked them, I said, "Well, is this a antibiotic?" Um, they told me no. They told me what it was. And I said, "Well, can I just buy something over-the-counter to get him through until I can get something?" And they said yeah, it's just a, a decongestant was all that was, with a antihistamine in it. And so then the next day, on Sunday ... Or no, on Saturday. I'm sorry. Saturday, I, um, picked that up for him.

G. Linda, he's ... (inaudible)

L. Hi Joe.

Joe. I heard about ... Sorry honey.

L. Thanks.

Joe. Somethin' I can do, I don't know. I got, I got a log home package over there. And it's here for five years. It's been, never been water running. A log, log home. And the foundation probably is good too. And I got a guy that's a builder who's looking to design a log home. So if you're wantin' to do anything like that. I know right now, you ... (inaudible)

L. I don't know anything right now.

Joe. So ... Keep in touch. When is the funeral?

L. Um, I'm supposed to meet at 2:00 in Portage with the funeral home.

Joe. Hmm mm.

L. Um ...

Joe. Hmm mm.

L. As soon as I get done here, then I'll meet ...

Joe. Okay.

L. ... with Todd's mom and family ...

Joe. Okay.

L. ... settin' that up.

Joe. Alright. Yeah, I know, I went through ... my son was sixteen when he died, in '93. So ...

L. (inaudible)

Joe. And, ah, my best friend just died about a month and a half ago. He was forty ... He was, ah ... what was Dennis? He was 51.

L. Mm.

Joe. But ...

L. Well we've gotta finish this up, and then we'll go in there and then I'll set that all up, and ...

Joe. Okay.

L. I've got people calling.

Joe. (unintelligible) ... Okay.

L. Do you have a business card, so ...

Joe. Yeah, I just put some in my wallet.

L. Okay.

Joe. I tell ya, I've got a, I've got a house, too. I've got that farmhouse over on ...

L. (unintelligible)

Joe. ... on the property.

L. Where Kim ... (inaudible) ... used to live?

Joe. Nobody's living ... Yeah.

L. Hmm mm.

Joe. Ah, nobody's living in it.

L. Okay.

Joe. Um, it needs a little Four-bedroom. It needs a little; it needs the water; I've got the well done; I've got everything done. Pry connect up the electric. Nobody's been living in there. Um, I've got all furniture's in there. I've got a brand new washer, dryer, ah, stove, refrigerator. Um, stuff like that. We'd have to get it fine tuned though.

L. Okay.

Joe. And, ah, stuff like that. I was gonna put a wood burner outside. I've got it over here, but never been fired. I paid 200 bucks. But, ah, okay. We'll ...

L. Well thanks for stopping.

Joe. Work something out. Okay.

L. Okay. You take care.

Joe. Hey ... (unintelligible) ... find out, ah, let Dave know or somebody.

L. Alright. I will.

Joe. Well, give me a call. You give me a call ...

L. I ...

Joe. ... and let me know.

L. Okay.

Joe. When the funeral is.

L. I'll give my friend your card and she's been ...

Joe. Alright. Cool.

L. ... helping me. Thank you.

Joe. Alright, thanks a lot.

L. Sorry.

J. Oh no, not a problem. Like I said, you've got ... This is only one of many things that you have to take care of, and ... Now with the house, upstairs, is there a second story?

L. There was just a loft. Yup. Todd just finished our son's bedroom up there.

J. And then the main floor has what as far as rooms?

L. Right here was a office/bedroom, like a guest room, but we had our computer and all that stuff in there. And then to the next room was a, a guest bathroom, and behind that was our master bathroom. And then there was a walk-through closet from the master bathroom to the master bedroom. And then this up here was all just entryway. And then there was a storage closet from the entryway wall to the fireplace. Um, in there where all the vents, the ductwork and everything, was all storage.

J. Okay. And that was built, built kind of in the closet area?

L. Yeah. And then the living room. And then this end right here, there was a pantry, mudroom, laundry room, but we didn't have laundry up here yet; it was just storage. And, um, then the kitchen and dining room were all one room. Between the dining room and the living room, there was just a half-wall. And, um ... Todd has his, um, oil lamp and candles burning on that half-wall.

J. And would they have been burning that day?

L. They were. 'Cause I had complained that it smelt bad in there, and, and that towel that he had thrown down in the laundry room. I said it was stinking up the house.

J. Now the towel, you say he threw down in the laundry room?

L. Yeah. And it was on the laundry room floor. And he told me to go ahead and wash that.

J. Did he say anything about how the towel got coated with oil, or ...

L. No. Um, sometimes our furnace would go out, and, um, he would have to bleed that. So I just figured ... We heated with fuel oil.

J. Now with the furnace, it is an oil furnace?

L. Hmm mm.

J. Is it hooked up with a blower and everything, so you can circulate air?

L. Yeah, I guess so.

J. The furnace burns, and then the fan comes on and circulates?

L. Forced air. Yeah.

J. Okay, yup.

L. I don't know how to shut that phone off. Or make it just vibrate, the ringer. I think they're the buttons on the side. It's Trevor's phone.

J. Now when you guys were home in the daytime, do you normally have your doors locked?

L. No.

J. How 'bout when you leave, if you're gone?

L. Um, if we're all gonna be gone, yes. Um, the boys didn't have a house key, so if the boys were gonna be home soon, then no.

J. Who has keys?

L. Todd and I.

J. Have you ever had any other fires?

L. Um, Todd had a fire at a house in Portage, when we lived in Portage.

J. And you say that was, you lived there, it was?

L. Um, we lived in one house and there was a little house on the property that he had, and it burnt down.

J. And about how long ago?

L. It was when we first moved there, so it would've maybe been '90 or '91, '92, somewhere in there. We moved out here in '96. So ...

J. That's my next question, how long have you lived here?

L. Um, here in this house, only three years. But in Lawrence, '96,

J. And I take it the house was built in that last three years?

L. Todd built this house, yeah.

J. Any plans of moving out of here before the fire?

L. Um ...

J. I mean other than you going to stay at your sister's.

L. No plans. Um, Todd just always talked about maybe buying some property in Canada, and ...

J. Nothing serious?

L. No.

J. Or it wasn't like you were gonna sell it and move.

L. We weren't looking or seeking, or ... if that's what you mean.

J. And this is three years old. So he built the entire home? Did he have contractor help on any of it?

L. Um, he had someone who was a builder come in and lay out the plumber. He had someone from a furnace place and lay out and, um, help with the ductwork and put the furnace in. And he hired somebody to do the shingles on the roof 'cause he didn't like being on his knees like that. And, um, the electric, somebody, you know, hooked that up. He put it all there, but they inspected it and ...

J. Oh, okay, so ...

L. ... hooked it up.

J. He basically just kind of subcontracted it himself, what he didn't do on his own?

L. Yeah.

J. Now since the house was built, has there been any changes to it?

L. We've just been doing little things here and there to it. I mean like my son's bedroom in the loft. Um, we just got him moved up there. Paint, Todd just finished painting it not too long ago and ... And, um, we bought brand new carpet and put it up there, and ...

J. Never been any other fires inside this house?

L. No.

J. And now has anybody else been here to investigate the fire? I'm assuming the fire department was out.

L. I guess so. I haven't been back here since it all happened.

J. Have you had any contact with the fire department? Has anybody called you or talked with ya?

L. No.

J. Now is this the Lawrence Fire Department's area?

L. Um, yeah, but I ... A friend of mine who came and visited today said that the Decatur Fire Department came here, too.

U. (inaudible)

L. It just seemed like it, everything took forever for anybody to get here.

U. (inaudible)

L. It's here.

U. It's here?

L. Sorry.

U. Yeah.

L. By the garbage can.

U. By the garbage can. Okay. Bye.

L. Brain cloud.

- J. Now during, during the morning ... Or I should say, let's talk about now the half-wall divides the kitchen and the family room area. What kind of oil lamps were on there?
- L. Um, just, um, one was a fragranced. It was a little plastic thing, I always said it was childproof because you ...
- J. Is it one of those little like an incense ...
- L. With a wick in it, and it has a smell. Um, it was vanilla. And you open the cap and this thing pops up. And you light that thing. It's got a little metal thing with a wick, and ...
- J. Oh, so it's just a ... It's not like the big hurricane lamps?
- L. No, but, um, we had one of those, um ... blown glass, um, for oil also, with a, with a wick in it.
- J. Now the scented one, was that one of those, like the Airwick or one of those that has, it's just a small container ...
- L. It's just a small container, but I don't know what kind it was. Just that it was ...
- J. Do you know where it came from? Is it something that he purchased, or is it something that ...
- L. Yeah. Um ... And he had the oil, too. Um ...
- J. How big on ... On the smallest one, how big of a container would you say that was? You know, one cup, two cups?
- L. I don't know, like, um, maybe like a baby bottle, the smaller kind of ...
- J. I'm not familiar with that ... (unintelligible)
- L. Like a ...
- KL. Four ounces.
- L. Four ounces. Thanks. She has a new grandbaby.
- J. Ah. Familiar with those sizes. Now the blown glass one is set up for an oil lamp.
- L. Yeah.

J. It has a wick.

L. Yes.

J. Did it have the twisty thing for raising and low ...

L. No.

J. Okay.

L. Just a decorative more. I didn't understand how those things could ... It's just a little bitty glass plug that holds the ...

J. Oh, like a glass bead that sits on top and then the wick comes up through it?

L. Yeah.

J. And how big was that one?

L. Not terribly.

J. I mean was it ...

L. Like ...

J. ... four ounces, eight ounces?

L. More than the small one, but not a ... maybe just like double. Maybe like eight ounces or something.

J. And then there's just the two of those?

L. Yeah.

J. And then what type of candles?

L. Just, um, scented candles.

J. Are they big candles? Or like the little tea light?

L. No, just in the, um, glass jar. Small. Like maybe votive size or something.

J. About how many of those were going?

L. Um, one that I seen.

J. And then both ...

L. It was on the bar, on the kitchen counter, where he was doing bills in, in the morning. There was a ... I'm sorry. The, the kitchen and the dining room were separated only by a bar. Countertop with cabinets underneath. Do you know about how much longer we'll be?

J. Yeah, that's why I'm looking at the clock. I'm kind of ...

L. I'm sorry.

J. I'm kind of pushing through. Yeah, 'cause I know you've got other appointments. That's, when you said, "I have to be there at two," that's why I'm looking at the clock. Anything unusual happen that morning? Lights that didn't work? Breakers that were tripped? Something unusual?

L. Not that I can think of. I just know our furnace was, um ... had to be bled out again in the last couple of days, but not that day.

J. So you say the furnace wasn't bled on that day?

L. No.

J. Now the furnace is an oil furnace. How often have you had to have this bleed, you know, do the bleeding of it?

L. Well, um, I think he did it like Saturday night. Um, last winter, we had to have Fields come out a couple of times. And Todd thought maybe we had, maybe water in the fuel. But apparently, when they set us up, they didn't put the, the, um, tubing all the way down like it should've been, or it was too close, or something. He said somehow there was air getting in, or something to one of those tubes, and ... He'd just go down and open a thing, and there was a little hose, and he would just bleed it through.

J. Now if he had to bleed it like that, did he end up with oil on the floor?

L. Yeah.

J. It kind of makes a mess.

L. Yeah. And kitty litter we'd put down in there sometimes, and ...

J. Yeah, that's one of the problems with oil. It's great for heat and stuff, but it's a little messy to work with if you have a problem.

- L. (unintelligible) ... I was afraid to death of propane. He wanted to put propane in here, and I wouldn't have propane.
- J. Any opinions, in your mind, what do you think happened to cause the fire? I mean have you had any kind of problems or something that you think is going on? Or what do you think caused the fire?
- G. Go ahead and tell him ... (inaudible)
- L. I kind of feel like maybe ... Todd yelled at me once during the day and told me that nobody else would ever have me. And I just ... I think that maybe he meant for both of us to ... I don't think I was supposed to be here.
- J. Did he say anything about killing himself or killing you?
- L. He has in the past. That's why I went to, um, go to see about getting a divorce, because he had told me a couple months ago that God was just testing him to see which one of us was supposed to go. And he had brought up his, um, shotgun after hunting one day and was cleaning it, and I knew, I seen out of the corner of my eye when he walked up the stairs, that the gun was cocked, and he had his cleaning stuff in his hand. And he came over and stood right behind me, when the computer was in the dining room, and, and he pointed it, but it was not ... I could see in the computer screen, the barrel of it was not pointed straight at me, but he stood there. And he just said, behind me, he said, "I'm really sorry to have to do this, Linda." And I turned around and I looked at him, and he just laughed at me and said I should've seen my face because I looked really scared, and that he was just messing with me. And that's when I decided that I had to take some legal steps, and talked to my sister, and made arrangements.
- J. And about how long ago was this?
- L. November.
- J. So at that point you kind of decided that ...
- L. That was ...
- J. ... things probably weren't gonna turn around?
- L. (inaudible)
- J. Did you smell anything in the house?
- L. Yeah, it stunk. Like that towel. But mostly in the basement.

- J. Now was the furnace working that day?
- L. Yes.
- J. Now when you came upstairs ... Now you said you could hear him yelling, and then it turned to screaming, what was he yelling at that point? Was he just ...
- L. That's when he was yelling at me that nobody else would ever ...
- J. Has he ever said flat outright that he was going to kill you? Has he ever threatened to kill you?
- L. (inaudible)
- J. In those um, those words? Did he say anything on this weekend, Saturday, Sunday, anything about gonna kill himself, or ...
- L. (inaudible)
- J. That's no?
- L. Not this weekend. I'm sorry.
- J. Okay. Yeah. Oh I know, people aren't used to ...
- L. Um, he did say ... I'm sorry. He didn't say anything about killing himself, but he did say about our bills and how much we owed his sisters and his mom, and the mortgage and everything, and that we didn't have enough life insurance on both of us to ... You know, it'd take both of our life insurance policies to take care of everything.
- J. Did you ever discuss what goes on with the boys at that point?
- L. No. We've always, we had a plan that his sister ... We discussed that years ago. That, you know ...
- J. Now was there a noise? Did you hear any sound between when he was yelling with the threats and the argument, and between when you heard the actual screaming? Was there any noise that ...
- L. When I got outside the door, um, I heard a noise, a, a, a small boom, and then I could hear a beeping. I could hear then a, a smoke or a fire detector at that point. But ... but that was after I got outside.
- J. And then where is the stairway that comes from the main level to the basement?

L. Um, right where the furnace, or the ... right behind the fireplace, where the closet was, and then the stairway was right there.

J. Okay, now does it go straight down into that room? Or ...

L. Yeah, straight, straight down that way.

J. Okay, it goes down this way?

L. Yes. From the kitchen to the downstairs.

J. You don't have blueprints for this hidden anywhere, do you?

L. I'm sure AGS has them. Um, Associated Governmental Services in Schoolcraft. 'Cause I know that Todd designed it, and he filed everything, very meticulously, with them. All of our permits and everything.

J. That's Associated Governmental?

L. Yes.

J. That might make it real easy to find out what everything looks like.

L. Yeah.

J. And now you came up the stairs, where was Todd at?

L. Um, when I came around the corner from the stairway, to the living room, there was a lot of fire between our bedroom door and his recliner. And he was more closer to our bedroom, and there was just fire and a lot of smoke, and it ... But there was no fire from ... there was a point in the living room where there, it, it was like, it was between our bedroom and his recliner, but nothing on this side of it.

J. Nothing on this side coming back towards the kitchen, dining room, and the stairwell?

L. Kitchen, dining room, nothing.

J. Is it possible, I won't do it now, to have you kind of draw a sketch of what the floor plan was?

L. Yes ... (inaudible)

J. We won't do that now, 'cause I still have probably, I'm gonna need probably another half-hour. But maybe we can do that later.

L. Okay.

J. 'Cause I know you have other appointments.

L. Thank you very much.

J. Then that way, we can kind of sketch the floor plan. The flames that you saw, where was the fire at? Was it on the ceiling? On the furniture? On the floor?

L. I could see Todd's legs. The chair was on fire, and then there was a little bit of fire on the floor. And then there was a lot of fire over by our bedroom. Um, I couldn't tell if it was him or if it was the wall, or what it was. I just

G. But then after you were outside and he came outside

L. He was covered.

G. With fire.

L. Fire. Just completely covered.

J. Now how did you go out? Which way did you go?

L. I ran out this front door, and ...

J. Out the front door? Is that the same way he came out?

L. I don't know where he came out at.

U. No.

L. When I came out though, I don't remember closing the door, but I heard the door slam. I mean it, it just went ... whoosh. And ...

J. And that's when the door slammed?

(phone conversation in background)

J. Now when you came outside, what did you see as far as smoke and fire? I mean did you ... When you first came out, what did you do?

L. It was just black. I, I, um ... I ran towards the side of the house, and I seen a bunch of smoke. And so I ran and I got into the van ... 'cause of I didn't have no way to call anybody unless I got to the neighbors. And I didn't have any shoes on. So I, I was, I thought for a second I'd run through the horse pasture, but then I thought I should drive the van ...

J. And then you say you see smoke, was the smoke coming out doors, windows, or just through the roof?

L. I don't even remember. I just know that I seen smoke. But I don't even remember where it was. It seemed like it was on ... I remember looking up at some point and seeing a bunch of black smoke, but I don't remember at what point that was.

J. And then you jumped in the van, and did you actually drive out in the van?

L. I had backed up, but then I seen Todd. So I pulled forward real quick and jumped out to see if I could help him, but he wouldn't lay down. He was trying to pull his pants and his socks off, and ... And so I screamed at him and told him to lay down. And ...

J. And then how did the fire department ultimately ... Did you ultimately make a call to the fire department?

L. No, um, when I was with Todd down here ... 'cause I couldn't get the van back up, 'cause it's so muddy over here, we don't have gravel over here. And, and I pulled over here to try and stop and help him. And then I realized I couldn't and I had to get somebody to help us. And so I jumped back in the van, but I couldn't back back up. And so, usually we go down the, to the driveway, 'cause it's real sandy right in front of the house, and, and get going fast and get back up, and ... But then I seen him laying over there, so I jumped out of the van and ran to him. He wasn't on fire anymore. And then I seen our neighbors come up, and I was just screaming at 'em to call 911.

J. Now whereabouts was he laying ... (unintelligible)

L. Over on the ...

J. Between here and where the driveway goes around?

L. Yeah.

G. (inaudible) ... About from here to that gold car.

J. Oh, okay.

G. And there is a spot in the dirt where there's a, a blood spot, and that ...

J. Okay.

G. ... may be where his head was. And his body then was face, was going towards the tree line. It's still there; I just saw it a few minutes ago.

J. And then you say neighbors then pulled in?

L. Yeah. Then while I was laying on him and trying to keep his mouth open and keep him breathing, then another neighbor got here and said that he was a medic; I didn't realize who it was at first. And they pulled me away from Todd and started checking him over. And they got, um, that boat that's over there, from somewhere, I don't even know where that was, and they put Todd in that and then drug him away from the house farther, over here somewhere. And the paramedics then finally got here, but it seemed like it took them forever to get here. And I don't know who got here first. I was just right there.

J. Let me grab my form. If you wanna take a look at this. This is a form that gives me permission, 'cause I know you guys have to run. Do you mind taking a look at that? So basically it explains who I am and what I'm gonna do; gives me permission. And then at some point later this afternoon, when you get everything done, we can finish. 'Cause I've got a bunch of other stuff on the house, and ...

L. Okay.

J. And then maybe if you could take ... and just a floor plan. You know, square box with kitchen, dining room ... (unintelligible) ... some of that sort of stuff, so I get an idea of what's there. And then I will try and check with the other, with that Associated Services and see if maybe they've got a blueprint. They're located in ...

L. They're in Schoolcraft.

J. ... in Schoolcraft? Are they in the phone book?

L. Yeah.

G. I guess I would only be concerned that I wouldn't want her signing that to interfere with the authorities' investigation.

L. I had to sign something ... I didn't have to, but I signed something for the police already.

J. Right. Yes. Yeah, and I had contacted them to make sure it was okay for me to go on the scene.

G. Okay.

J. And they said yeah, that they were done with the scene.

G. Okay.

J. Yeah, we don't go; we have ...

G. Right.

J. ... to call them and say, "Hey, are you done? Can we go in there?"

G. Yeah. I'm assuming that, that they wouldn't give you permission. But okay ...

J. (unintelligible)

G. ... everything ... Yeah, go ahead and ... (inaudible)

J. Yeah. And then as far as collecting any evidence, what I'm looking at is going in and looking at, you know, at, you know, what's there, mechanical wiring. We may end up ...

G. Sure.

J. ... needing an electrical engineer to look at the electrical.

G. Sure.

J. Or the furnace, to make sure the furnace didn't malfunction. And then normally, the kind of things we collect are appliances or anything fail ... that kind of stuff.

G. Sure.

J. Photographs, video, that sort of stuff. But, you know, that's generally what it is. But yeah, we have to contact them ...

G. Sure.

J. ... before anytime we have any kind of an injury or a serious fire, and we know that the fire department's involved ... most of 'em are using the state investigators when we're out here in the rural areas, so you contact them and say, "Hey, are you done? Can I get in the scene?"

G. Okay.

J. Okay?

G. Go ahead, Linda, and sign and date it.

J. I do have a pen here. Yeah, 'cause I know you guys have to run, and then I can go in and start my analysis and poking through things.

KL. Let me hand you my card too, in case you have to, like if you can't get me ...
(inaudible)

J. Oh, okay.

KL. ... at work.

J. Oh, okay. And you have my card. That phone number is my office phone; I always forward that. Plus I think you both have my cell phone number.

G. Okay.

J. And that's it. And like I said, I'm gonna be here probably for, you know, several hours. I don't know what your schedule is, but I probably, maybe another half-hour with you to finish going through the house.

L. I'm sorry for the poor planning.

J. Pardon me?

L. I'm sorry.

J. Oh no. Well no, no. That's, and like I said, you know, normally, you know, people drive up and say ... (unintelligible) ... But you have much more going on with this; with the loss of your husband, it just makes so much more work. So, you know, and basically, my job is here, and if I can't finish today, I'll be back in the morning to do it. So like I said, I don't know what your schedule is. I've got several hours. If you could draw the floor plan, that's real helpful. And then we can go from there. But like I said, I've got probably another half-hour's worth, and then I won't bother you anymore.

L. My daughter may be coming back for that tire today if, if you're here while ...

J. Oh, okay. Yeah.

L. ... when she comes. Um, she could also diagram a floor plan for you, if you need one.

J. Oh, okay. And what was her name?

L. Britney.

J. Oh, okay. Yeah, I'll see ... Yeah.

L. She's nineteen.

J. Okay. Yeah, that, that might help.

L. She could be very helpful to you.

J. I have 1:56 p.m. I can stop ... (end of first part of interview)

J. Okay, this will be a continuation of my interview yesterday of Linda ... Excuse me, Linda Stermer. It's KBA case number 07-1262. Client on it's 2388. This, today is Wednesday, January the 10th of '07, and it's right, approximately eleven a.m. And then we can just continue where we left off yesterday. And since you have that diagram there, we can kind of go over the details. Or if you need to make changes, we can do that. Or draw a new one. That kind of ...

L. Yeah.

J. You said that this is pretty close.

L. Ah, it's pretty ... the basement is, is very accurate. Um, the stairs were more over to this side, because the fireplace ...

J. Oh, okay.

L. ... is right here.

J. Well let me, let me draw it right. So the stairway would've been ...

L. On this ...

J. ... closer towards the front.

L. Yeah. Yes.

J. And then there's the fireplace is built in here.

L. Yes. And then we had storage behind the fireplace. There's a ... If you make this wall right here ...

J. Oh, okay. So actually this wall kind of comes across ...

L. Yeah.

J. Our stairs are over here.

L. Yes. And there's no wall here.

J. Okay.

L. Um ...

J. And then this is storage.

L. Storage.

J. I'm sorry. And you are?

KS. I'm ...

L. This is Kate Swift. I'm sorry.

J. Oh, hi Kate.

L. This is who I'm staying with.

J. Oh, okay. I'm Jim Shinsky.

KS. Nice to meet you.

J. Don't mind my dirty hand. It's ...

KS. Oh ...

J. It's Kate?

K. Yup.

J. And what's the last name?

KS. Swift. S-W-I-F-T.

J. F-T. And how about a phone number, if I need to get a hold of you, Kate?

KS. Um, I'll give you my cell phone number. 838-3455. And do you ... I can give you my house number, too. It's ...

J. Which is the better one to get a hold of you if I needed to?

KS. Usually my cell phone.

J. If I can't get a hold of her. Yeah.

KS. Yeah, my cell phone.

J. Okay. And that's 269?

KS. Yup.

J. Ah, okay. Sorry about that.

L. And I'm almost completely with her all the time. She won't let me leave. Um, there was a gun cabinet here on this wall, right here.

J. Was that built in the wall?

L. No, it's just a freestanding gun cabinet. And then the furnace, she says right here ...

J. Hmm mm.

L. Which is completely correct. And ...

J. And then the oil tank sits out here somewhere outside the wall?

L. Yes. This whole wall here was a closet, and then an alcove with a dresser right here.

J. Something like that?

L. Pretty much. And there was a opening about four or six feet wide here, so it was all one room.

J. Oh, okay.

L. It, it wasn't, you know, separated. I mean, we had a bed in here and a bed in here, but it was all mainly one room. There was just a half-wall, or a wall half the way down this way, and then there was a small ... Because there was a cold air return right here.

J. Was that kind of built in ...

L. Yes. I don't know if you want to know where furniture was in the basement.

J. Furn ... Yeah, that's ...

L. Okay. Um, Cory had just moved his bed onto this wall right here.

J. Okay. Let's do this and at least square it up.

L. And he had dressers and desks and stands, and everything all along this whole wall. Just all kind of furniture along there. Um, there was a closet right here on this wall.

J. Now was there a door to get in, obviously?

L. Um, this closet was open to the living room side.

J. Oh, okay.

L. We didn't have ... The only closet in this area here was this big closet down here for the two boys.

J. And the closet door's on the living room side.

L. Right.

J. And this, of course, are sliders, were over here somewhere?

L. Yeah. Um, apparently, according to code or something, if we would've wanted to make this two separate bedrooms, we would've had to put a window or something there.

J. Oh yeah, you'd have had to have an egress window ...

L. Yeah.

J. ... so that they can ...

(phone ringing)

L. I'm sorry.

J. Did I turn this thing on? Yeah, I did.

(phone conversation in background)

L. Um, Trenton, he just moved, he had bunk beds, but they were just separated. Um, they were along this wall. So you had two end-to-end on this wall. And I think his TV stand was like on this wall right here. And there was a door, another door right here coming in the back way ...

J. Okay.

L. ... of this room. Um ...

J. Now the stairway came down this direction from ...

L. Yeah.

J. ... like the kitchen and that above?

L. This, this is where we entered the stairway to go upstairs.

J. Oh, okay. So it came out of, it came ... From the kitchen, you came downstairs and went right ...

L. From this side.

J. ... into the living, into the laundry room?

L. Yeah, almost exactly. I mean this was a hallway here. Todd had, um, a wall right here.

J. Oh, okay.

L. And there was a ...

J. So this is probably an opening at this end ...

L. Yes. That was completely opened up right there.

J. ... so that you can get in that hall?

L. Yup.

J. And then that gets you into the laundry and the bathroom in the back.

L. Um, the ... Can I see your pencil? I'm sorry.

J. Yup.

L. It's just kind of hard. Um ... The bathroom was actually kind of a different kind of a shape. It was ... whoops.

J. Whoops.

L. Sorry.

J. Oh, that's all ... Yeah ... (unintelligible)

L. There was a door right here to the ... ah, it went the other way, I think. Door right here to the bathroom. The tub was right here. And then there were shelves right here. And the laundry room door was right ... that went the other way, too. All turned around here.

J. Yup.

L. Um, the washer and dryer were along this wall here.

J. Oh, okay.

(phone ringing)

L. It's gonna do that all darn day.

J. Yeah, that's ...

(phone conversation in background)

J. That's, I tried to call you this morning and it was busy, busy, I said that's not surprising. Okay. So basically, you come down the stairs this direction, and then ...

L. And there's a big hallway landing there.

J. ... doorway into the bathroom door, and then this opens up. Now is there any way to get around ... This is a solid area?

L. Oh, I'm sorry. I got this wall too wide here.

J. So there is space that you can go the other way to get in the workroom?

L. Yeah. This didn't come out all that far here. And there was a door right here.

J. Oh, okay.

L. That went this way, and, um ...

J. And then this is the tub.

L. This is all utility room.

J. You have a tub, and then the whole thing is utility room. See, I get down in there, I can clean up the diagram. But ... And so now the workroom, what kind of stuff was in the workroom?

L. Um, well all Todd's construction tool stuff. Um, he had these big Ryobi ... ah, just for Christmas I bought him another Ryobi tool to go with his kit. He had one of those great big huge suitcases ...

J. Yup.

L. ... the eighteen-volt cordless.

J. Yup, I've got one of those in my car.

L. And I just got him a jigsaw for Christmas. And he had the, the drills and the, um, hammer, um, power hammers, whatever you call them. And he had a big table on this wall here, from about here to, to the doorway. It was just a huge work table. And on this wall, we had, um, right back here, we had a, a water heater and a bladder tank, or something like that.

J. Okay. So that water heater then ... Is that the well system and everything is back there?

L. Yeah, 'cause the well comes right up, um, just on the south side of the porch is where the well enters into the basement. And then there was a, a sink, a utility work kind of a, big huge washtub, double sink there. And then he had dressers all along here that had tools and, you know, electric. All, all kinds of stuff. Plumbing stuff, and ...

J. Now how about, before you ... on the boys' rooms, what are we talking about walls inside? Are they drywall?

L. No walls inside. Um ...

J. It's just the cement? Or are they ...

L. Cory's was still concrete along this whole wall. Trenton's, Todd had just finished. It was all drywall; ev, everyone of these walls had drywall. And the ceiling had a, um ... It was really cool. He made it kind of like a shadow boxing with one-by-sixes. Um, he put in Styrofoam, the really thick sheets ...

J. Hmm mm.

L. ... of Styrofoam up on the ceiling, and then shadow boxed it with the one-by-sixes to cover up all the seams. And just made a bunch of squares all over the ceiling, so ... And Trenton had carpeting. Cory just had a remnant of carpeting, I think. Just a ...

J. Now in the living room/rec. room, the fireplace, of course, is right at this end here.

L. Yeah.

J. What was on the floor in here? Is this carpet?

L. Um, not in this end; just in this end. This was just concrete.

J. And then these, the front wall, the wooden wall along the west side is all, was that probably all drywall?

L. Yes. Um ... No. It was drywall and wood. He had walnut tongue and groove.

J. Oh, okay. But it was ... This part of it was finished?

L. Yes. The only wall that was still concrete in there was this half-wall down at that far end, the bottom. The upper part of it was all drywall. But there was a lot of ... I can't tell you exactly where all of it was ... I know the whole closet was all tongue and groove walnut. And I know most of this wall here was all tongue and groove walnut. And, um, half of this wall, I don't remember which side, but one side was tongue and groove and one side was drywall, and he had a deer hanging on the wall there.

J. Now as far as lighting, if you come down the stairs, are there, is there lights in the stairwell?

L. Good golly.

J. I know I'm asking a bunch of nit-picky questions, but Monday, we're probably gonna be out here going through the wiring, and if you can tell me where stuff was, it makes it a little easier to trace.

L. The laundry room, I had a light switch right here on this wall.

J. Is that an overhead light?

L. Um, pretty close to the washer and dryer, an overhead light.

J. Is that fluorescent tubes, or just the single bulb?

L. No, we didn't have any fluorescent tubes, I don't think, anywhere in the house.

J. And that was just a regular light bulb?

L. Yeah. Um, the bathroom, there was a set of switches right behind the door, kind of off to the side. There was, um, three switches, I believe, and then a single switch, all on one box. Um, a fan, an overhead light, um, a nightlight in the overhead light, and then a light above the vanity.

J. Okay.

L. Um, we had a bar of lights above the vanity. Um, I think the downstairs bathroom might've been six bulbs. One of the bathrooms was four bulbs and one of 'em was three bulbs. I think the downstairs bathroom was the biggest one. No, maybe the upstairs ...

KS. (inaudible)

L. I can't remember for sure. But one of 'em was, it seemed like it was six, and one of 'em was four.

KS. I think the downstairs had the ... (inaudible)

L. And then, um ... Oh, on this wall where the tub was, this is where our power box was, right here. On, on this wall right there.

J. On the workroom side?

L. On the workroom side. And there were some wires there that weren't ever hooked up to anything yet.

J. Okay.

L. Some Todd had, um, you know, run circuits to places, which we weren't using yet, that he didn't put into that power box yet.

J. They just weren't totally connected yet ready to go.

L. Right. He had decided on hooking up a couple extra things in some places in the house and ran everything so it'd be ready, but ...

J. Okay. Now if we come in the workroom door, is there a light in there ?

L. Yeah. There was, um ... this was all two-by-fours back here. Um, he, he had some OSB, I think maybe, on this back wall, but there was a section here that he left empty to run another circuit if he needed, and there was a, a electric outlet, and then there was electric light switch. Or a, not electric, a light switch right there. So you had to reach around ...

J. Come in the door and reach around?

L. Yeah. 'Cause there was the framing for the door, but you had to reach back around. I never could find that in the dark.

J. Now is that an overhead light also?

L. Yeah, somewhere in there, but I couldn't tell ya exactly where. And there was a smoke detector, um, electric, I think, smoke detector ...

J. Oh, okay.

L. ... right in there, too. He had me pick up a contractor box when we were building, and then he had me recently pick up another, like around Thanksgiving time, contractor box of more smoke detectors. And he'd get like four packs, I guess, of them.

J. Okay now with the smoke detectors, are they all hardwired? They're wired right in?

L. I think so.

J. How many are there in the house?

L. Um, there was one for our bedroom. I don't remember if he had that hooked up. There was one for the office that was there. There was one for the pantry. Our son's bedroom in the loft had one. And I don't know where the other ones were.

J. Now you said your son's bedroom in ...

L. The loft.

J. ... the loft. Okay. That ... Okay. That's, I was gonna ... Is that two rooms, or is it one?

L. One room. One big room.

J. So that's the pantry room here.

L. Hmm mm.

J. And then the master bedroom, and then the loft up above?

L. Hmm mm.

J. Now is that loft, it's all open? You have a big cathedral ceiling and the loft is open above?

L. Yes.

J. And then this ...

L. It was on this side, that ...

J. (unintelligible)

L. ... side of the house.

J. (unintelligible)

L. Yeah.

J. And that's what Britney was saying, like the corner, there was an open section in the wall ...

L. Yes.

J. ... that you could see down into the room?

L. Yeah, it was kind of neat there.

J. Yeah, she did a pretty good job on the diagram. Now on the basement level, you said there was a smoke detector in the workroom.

L. Yea.

J. Any others downstairs?

L. I think in the boys' bedrooms. Yeah, 'cause when I bought the other box, I asked him how many more we needed so we'd have one in every single room of the house.

J. Let's see, we did carpet, windows ... I mean, now were there drapes on the windows across the front?

L. No.

J. These are all the things that I'm going to be digging across as we excavate.

L. No drapes in the basement whatsoever.

J. Now when the boys leave home, do they normally leave their bedroom doors open?

L. Yeah.

J. Would these interior doors basically, probably generally be open or closed?

- L. They're generally open, unless the dogs are muddy.
- J. Okay, well let's move upstairs. This one we may have to do ...
- L. Oh, there was a pool table in the basement.
- J. Oh, okay. Yeah.
- L. And there was a Christmas tree.
- J. Okay.
- L. The Christmas tree was more over here.
- J. Is that a real one or a fake one?
- L. Real.
- J. Yeah. Okay.
- L. And we had two chairs here and a, a sofa here.
- J. And then there's a sofa like that?
- L. Hmm mm. One of the chairs is a recliner. I don't remember which order they were in. But the TV was on this wall. Right, right next to the closet, there was a entertainment center with a television. And then there, the pool table was right in the middle right here.
- J. Oh, in the ... (inaudible) ... yeah.
- L. And I, there were tons of boxes of Christmas ornaments on and beside the pool table, 'cause the night before, I was packing up some of the stuff. You know, some of the bigger stuff from ... Oh, there was a china cabinet on this wall, a big hutch.
- J. Hmm mm.
- L. And then there was a buffet on this wall here. And a, a dart board we just got for Christmas hanging up right there. And then ...
- J. And then where was that ... It looked like an exercise machine?

L. Yeah, it was, it was kind of right behind this chair right, right here, facing this way. Huge exercise thing we just got for Christmas. And then right here on this wall, there was a big old hundred and some year old trunk that had all my kids' baby clothes in 'em.

J. Okay.

L. And I think that's all the furniture.

J. Okay. Let's move upstairs.

L. Okay. Um, I better erase a little bit here.

KS. If you guys get too warm, I can turn the heat down.

J. (unintelligible)

L. You just gave him the go-ahead.

KS. Only 'cause I know I was getting warm back here.

J. Yeah, like I said, I've got my extra layer on. Yeah, like I said, I was, I was fine at 28 and sunshine, isn't too bad. Yesterday was miserable, 'cause the wind was blowing right through.

KS. Oh yeah.

L. Oh: Okay. The ... whoops. Here. Sorry. Um, where do you want to start at?

J. Well, let's start with the master bedroom. Let's just go right around.

L. We have sliders right here. We had, um ... a big glass jar of change in the corner. My daughter's senior picture collage. Um, we had a big, ah, dresser, double dresser along that wall there. Our, um ... Oh. Our ... it's kind of ... Our door was right here ...

J. Oh, okay.

L. ... instead. And, and it kind of was a ...

J. Opened up into the ...

L. Yeah. Um, the door opened into the room, to this wall here. And then you could see our entire room there. Yeah.

J. And then where was the bed located?

L. And then the bed was right here. And a nightstand right beside of it, a small one. And then a dresser right there. And then on, there was a closet door right here, and another chest of drawers ... Well this is a chest of drawers, I'm sorry, too. And then the door went through the closet this way into the bath. In the master bathroom, there were shelves all along this wall here. And, um, right in the corner, there was a stand-up jewelry cabinet, a tall jewelry cabinet. And, um, underneath the shelves was another chest of drawers.

KS. (inaudible)

L. I had tons of clothes. I had, was a ... Todd was a clotheshorse.

KS. I know.

L. He, he had clothes from high school still. Mine were all from after high school at least. He had football jerseys to save for the boys. This end was all still open of the closet, but we had like a baby playpen, and it had a down, um, comforter, my daughter's prom dress ... (unintelligible)

J. Used items that were basically put in there, stored in there?

L. Yeah.

J. Yup. And then you come through ...

L. Um ...

J. ... into the ...

L. Come straight through, yup. And we had, um ... there was a tall cabinet right here, linen cabinet, that was like, I had my toiletries in one shelf, Todd's in another, towels and my, some of my jewelry, and, um ... The sink was ... there was a space for the garbage can, and then there was a sink, just a single vanity there. With the overhead lights above it. And a mirror. And the shower was in this corner, just a stand-up shower.

J. Was it a square shower?

L. Yup. The toilet was right here.

J. Against this wall? (unintelligible) ... this wall?

L. Um, this wall here.

J. Okay, I'm sorry.

L. And then a, a Jacuzzi bathtub right here. There was a light switch right here, on this wall. Um, and it was again, the three with the single.

J. Oh, okay.

L. Like the downstairs bathroom. All the bathrooms had that same kind of a switch.

J. And then you say that was the overhead light.

L. Yup, the overhead in the center of the bathroom, the lights above the vanity ... Um, the overhead light was, doubled as a, um, regular light and a nightlight. You could turn it either way. And then the fan. And then the closet, um, right behind this door and then right here, there was a light switch on both sides for, um, there was a overhead light on each ...

J. Oh, on each half?

L. ... end.

J. On each half?

L. Yeah, 'cause it was a his and hers. It was supposed to, the door was supposed to be moved over so my end was bigger, but ... he decided to make it equal. I told him I could invade his space anyway, so ... Um ...

J. And now, how about light switches in your bedroom?

L. Right next to the door, there was just a single light switch for our bedroom.

J. And that's an overhead light?

L. Hmm mm. I don't remember if we had a light switch ... It seems like ... Ah, I don't know if we had lights outside of our slider or not.

J. Yeah, some of that, that, we may still be able ... 'cause that end is still up; I can still see that. Now is this the guest bathroom?

L. Yeah, that's the guest bathroom. There was a shower right in the one side there, and the toilet was on the wall, facing our closet, right there. And then the sink was right there.

J. Just a single vanity again?

- L. Yup. And then I had a, a, a chair, a antique chair sitting there. I had a chair in our bedroom somewhere in, in this area, too. Another, um, chair over there somewhere.
- J. Is that an upholstered chair or a wooden chair?
- L. It's a old antique wooden chair with upholstery seat. The old-fashioned kind of springs ...
- J. Oh, okay.
- L. ... that make you feel like you're gonna pop up.
- J. The frame and the ...
- L. And then the back of it was upholstered. You know, but it was all wood.
- J. Hmm mm. And then this ...
- L. This is the same; it was all wood and upholstery.
- J. Okay. And then now the front office, that looks like a small bedroom.
- L. Yeah. Um, there was a loveseat here on this wall. And I had a huge antique bed frame just sitting on the wall by the window over here. It was a headboard and a footboard, and it was kind of curved. There were drapes on both windows, double drapes on both windows. Um, the desk started at this corner here and moved all the way right to the window. It was, um, there was a cabinet with a shelf and then the desk; the computer tower was underneath the desk, more towards that shelf right here. Um, then, ah, right next to the desk in this direction was, um, two-drawer file cabinet. All of it was all the same kind of wood.
- J. Okay. Now the entry area, you come in through the front door. This is kind of a big open area?
- L. Yes.
- J. And then ...
- L. We had a, um, big huge, um, old walnut sideboard there that we kept like, um ... I kept my horse trimming tools in there, and just, you know, just a kind of catchall, I guess. We had mittens and gloves and hats. And then ...
- J. And then you had kind of a hallway around both sides?

- L. Yes. There was a light switch right here for Trevor's bedroom, to go up the stairs. And then, um ... Yeah, just inside of his bedroom door, upstairs in the loft, was another light switch.
- J. Okay.
- L. And, um ... The loft is kind of a funky shape. I could draw it out on another piece of paper for you, if you want me to.
- J. Okay. Yeah, I don't know, 'cause that's, that's kind of all still hanging there.
- L. Okay.
- J. That part of it is still there.
- L. 'Cause this end, above this whole area here was a closet for him. And then his whole bedroom up here. His bed was on like this wall, here. And his dresser down there.
- J. Okay, so the loft ran all the way to the front of the house?
- L. From, from the wall that the fireplace, all the way above the doors.
- J. Oh, okay.
- L. The whole ...
- J. So the hallways and that, this is all, has a ... Is this an eight-foot ceiling in there, probably?
- L. Hmm mm.
- J. Okay. So I see. So when you go up in the loft, the whole front section is part of the loft?
- L. Yes.
- J. Ah, okay. Well that makes sense.
- L. And when you go up the stairs, you could either turn towards the living room and look down into the living room there. And we had some storage right there. Or you could turn back the other way and go through a wood door into his bedroom.
- J. Okay. Well maybe, maybe I will have you draw that up. So that it makes, makes better sense.

L. Makes sense.

J. Yeah ... (inaudible) ... Put your artwork to ...

L. I think, I think it, it was like eighteen feet long, but I'm not sure. But if the front doors are right here, and his room ... The ... this whole area here was all the furnace ductwork. Um ...

J. All the, for the fireplace vents and ...

L. Fireplace. I think there were three big tubes.

J. Okay.

L. Seems like. One for the furnace and one for each fireplace. If that ... I think that's right. Um ... Then this was the stairway, coming up; went up this way. So he had a lookout right here. Um, his bedroom door, I think, we put like a 34 or 36, maybe a 36-inch door there. His chest of drawers, his bed ... big antique frame, six foot high.

KS. Someone's here ... (inaudible) ... go see who it is?

L. It might be the, um ...

J. That's the fire chief.

KS. Oh, okay.

J. In the red truck there?

KS. Yup.

J. Yeah, he's, he's looking for me.

KS. Oh, okay.

J. He's trying to ...

KS. (inaudible)

L. This was a closet, but we had a, kind of a opening back here so we could get into this storage area.

J. Okay.

- L. And that, above the stairway, then there was a ceiling, so that we could put more storage up above in there. Like holiday stuff all went up above the stairway.
- J. And that would've been above the stairway from downstairs, and in the loft area?
- L. Um, it was above the stairway in Trevor's room.
- J. Oh, okay.
- L. Yeah. So he had a ceiling going across that stairway. You know, up to, to the loft, there was a ceiling across that stairway. So that we could get inside where the fire vents were and put stuff above this stairway here.
- J. Above. Okay. There wasn't anything stored in here?
- L. Um, yeah, there was. There, there was quite a bit of Halloween stuff in there and, and probably Easter.
- J. Now when you crawl in here, can you see the three pipes, or are they ...
- L. Yes.
- J. ... enclosed?
- L. No.
- J. Oh, okay. So ...
- L. There was metal flashing on the floors for each ... Every one of the floors had storage behind the fireplaces. But there was a metal flashing and nothing was on the metal flashing at all. It was all, you know, to the ends. And I don't remember, one fireplace was this side and one fireplace was that side. I don't remember if it was the basement one, which one went which way. They were, Todd made 'em so that there could be a fireplace box right next to each of them, but one was offset one way and one was offset the other way. And Trev, Trevor had tons of boxes of school, old school papers, and pictures, and books, and magazines.
- J. The collection that we all have.
- L. Yeah My horse magazines, they complain profusely about. A few of Todd's hunting magazines I allowed him to keep.
- J. Yeah, I've gotten to the point I read 'em and throw 'em away.

KS. Hmm mm.

J. Let's get rid of 'em. Otherwise they just keep piling.

KS. (unintelligible)

L. Yup.

J. Living room?

L. Okay, the sofa was right along the windows.

J. And that was out in the little angle ...

L. The alcove.

J. ... that stuck out.

L. Yeah.

J. Yup. Making a wall there so that makes sense. And then the recliner was in here a little farther?

L. The, there was a chair sitting right ... a small wooden kitchen chair right there. For Todd's TV tray for his food, I guess. Popcorn and ... remote control. And then the chair was offset more over a little bit. The recliner.

J. Something like that? Moved out a little bit farther?

L. Yeah.

J. Yeah. And see, that's what Britney said, "I think there was a chair over here that somebody sat in and broke."

L. That, that was the chair that moved to my bedroom.

J. Okay. Well that's what she said. Yeah. She goes, "Well the last time I was here ..."

L. Well it wasn't ever supposed to go in the living room for all the public. It was my chair.

J. Fireplace, of course, against the ...

L. Yes.

Other
Sources
Accell

J. ... where the building for the loft is. TV against your master bedroom wall.

J. Yes.

J. Now you talked about oil lamps and a candle on the half-wall.

L. Yeah. There, this had all Christmas decorations and a little, um, oil lamp.

J. And you said there was two of ... Do you remember where they were positioned? I mean, just evenly spaced so they looked nice, or ...

L. Um, one was closer to Todd's chair and one was closer to this end here.

J. And then how about the candle?

L. The candle was on the bar.

J. Oh, over here.

L. Where he was doing the bills at that morning. We had a table right here in the corner that had a poinsettia ... on it. And we had a big dining room table here.

J. Kind of a big oval, by the way you're drawing it?

L. Yeah. And, um, we had a ...

J. Then there's a slider here.

L. Yup. And a slider on that ... right here. In the corner, we had a baker's rack.

KS. Your mom.

J. (unintelligible)

L. Hi Mom.

U. I didn't get contacts.

L. Oh, they didn't have 'em?

U. They had 'em, but they weren't paid for.

L. I thought Todd said that he paid for 'em. Okay. Alright, I'll go in later and get 'em then. You wanna sit in here?

U. Yeah, I can come around ... (inaudible)

- L. Well, I can move over. This door is ... (inaudible)
- J. I'm gonna turn, turn the heat down a little bit more.
- L. Here. This is my mother.
- J. Yup. Hi. I met her yesterday.
- L. Oh. Okay.
- J. I, I came in. She came in and checked to find out who I was.
- L. Oh. Watchdog, huh?
- J. Yeah.
- U. She's got a bunch of those.
- L. This bar was connected. There was a lazy Susan in the corner, and all cupboards. This was all one piece.
- J. So this is a big, big countertop, with a bar. And I think you said there were, yesterday, there were cabinets underneath the whole thing?
- L. Yeah, on the kitchen side were the doors. And there were bar stools, four of them. Three on this side and one at the end, usually. And, um, the phone was right here. There were light switches down there. There was a, a double and a single ... (inaudible) ... There was two sets of light switches right here. One was for the dining room, and above the bar, there was recessed lights. Two recessed lights. And there was a single central light in the dining room. And one of the switches was for the outside of the slider, but that wasn't hooked up yet. He had put the light outside there. The sink had a switch beside of it 'cause there was a recessed light above the sink. And then there was, um, a garbage disposal switch, too. There was, um, four electric outlets on each side of the sink. Ah, one ...
- J. So you had lots of counter space, with plugs that actually worked.
- L. Tons of counter space. Tons of cupboard space. The stove had a outlet on each side of the stove. A single outlet, I guess. With just a ... Above the stove was a microwave, and above the microwave was a small, short cupboard for cookbooks and stuff.

J. Okay. Now, as far as the rest of the furnishing and stuff in the living room, there was the recliner; TV was over here. Was there a sofa against the front? How about light switches and stuff in the living room? Did you have the overhead lights or ceiling fan, or anything?

L. In the cathedral ceiling, there was a ceiling fan light, kind of a ... it hung ...

J. Oh, one of those that hung down?

L. Yeah.

J. And where was the control for that?

L. The switch was right here on this wall. You could turn the light ... there was, um ... there was a box ... there was, um, closest to the kitchen there, there was two switches, one for the dining room, one for the kitchen. And then above and below, were like, um, dimmer-type ...

J. Hmm mm.

L. ... of switches. One to dim the lights and one to turn the fan higher and lower.

J. Okay, I think that ... Let me go back to ... That's not the one. Now when you came up the stairs, you would've been come ... You were down, when you were coming up the stairs after you heard Todd screaming, you would've come up the stairs this way?

L. Yeah. I came right up and I ran around this side here.

J. So through the kitchen and around. How far into the living room did you get?

L. I just got right, um, in between the fireplace and somewhere in here.

J. Okay. And then that's basically between ... Just, just inside the door opening. And then yesterday you said that you could see that fire was like from the master bedroom to the recliner. That, that half ...

L. The recliner was all on fire, and there was a big bunch of fire right by our bedroom door. And I could see Todd's ...

J. Okay. So he was actually over by the bedroom door?

L. Closer to the bedroom door. Kind of ... I don't know. Kind of in between our bedroom door and the fireplace. Kind of ... I don't know, somewhere in between, like in here. But I could see fire all the way back to ... I mean, it was just ...

Not
in
recliner

J. Was he coming towards you? Toward, out ...

L. I couldn't tell.

J. Now, I know, I realize this is difficult, but when you saw the flames, the recliner, could you still see the chair?

L. I don't remember.

J. Or was it just a big ball of flames?

L. I just kind of glanced. I just kind of ...

J. How about fire in between? Was the, was the whole room on fire? Or did it look like a concentration of fire over here?

(conversation in background)

L. It looked like a bunch of fire over there.

J. By the recliner.

L. And then there wasn't much fire between. And then there was a lot of fire over here.

J. And then when you took off, you just went out the front door?

L. (inaudible)

J. Okay. Then when you went out the front door, you said, yesterday you talked about, said you ran out to the van. Where was the van parked at?

L. Parked right in front of the house. I mean we drove right up to ... The contractors made a mistake. They weren't supposed to carry the driveway as far up as they did. So we took advantage of it.

J. So you'd pull right up by the front porch there?

L. Yeah.

J. Now what were you wearing? I mean did you have clothes on? Or still in your jammies from ...

L. No, I had on some, um ... pants and a sweater.

J. Now did you have keys for the van with ya?

L. We always leave ...

(phone conversation in background)

L. We leave our billfold and our keys in the vehicles. I don't, but Todd always does. I always bring mine in and put 'em in the drawer in the kitchen. But the boys had my vehicle. And so when the boys were taking off in the morning, I just took my purse and threw it over into the van. But Todd always kept the keys in ... I always ... (inaudible) ... about that, I hated it.

J. Okay. And then yesterday you explained that you went to the van, you were gonna try to go get help. And then where did you drive? You were parked in front of the house ...

L. I backed up, but then I seen Todd. So I pulled up this way, and stopped ...

J. And this way, you're pointing up here towards the north. Now he came out ... You don't know what door he came out?

L. He was just in the side yard here.

J. Okay. Up by the front of the house, or was he all the way around the side?

L. He was, he was closer to the front. Towards that rock pile.

J. Okay. And then what happened?

L. I pulled the van up real quick and jumped out. And was screaming at him to lay down. And he was trying to get his, um ... pants off. And I kept trying to get up and reach and grab him, his pants. And he just wouldn't stay still.

J. Okay. And then from the ...

L. And then he laid down ... And I looked at him and I thought oh my God, I gotta get him help. So I went to get back in the van, and I tried to back up, but I couldn't back up 'cause this is too muddy. And so I thought if I pulled down here real fast ... And I couldn't see Todd when I backed up. And, um, I pulled down here, 'cause I was gonna try and ... back up to get a running start, and ... I couldn't. And so I jumped back out and ran to Todd, and he was, he was laying right in here someplace. And I just laid on him and ...

J. And your, your idea was to back up down to the, the flats here and then try to get a running start up the hill?

L. Well we usually could if we got right in here, 'cause it's all sandy and we could ...

U. Back around.

J. Hmm mm. Back, just take and kind of zoom up the, the slippery hill?

L. But I wasn't thinking. I mean, with my Blazer, I can do it. With Cory's car, with the van, it's kind of like our pickup truck was. It's just so heavy, I guess, and ...

J. Is it a full-size van or ...

L. Big conversion van. At some point my neighbors got here. I seen my neighbors. And I'm screaming at them to call somebody, and ... I laid on Todd, and I'm trying to keep his airway open. I could tell he was still breathing, and ...

J. Which neighbors were that?

U. Mousalli.

J. Do you know?

U. Mousalli.

L. No, Mathenys.

J. Oh, okay.

L. Were here first.

U. Oh, I'm sorry.

L. I don't know when Mousalli got here.

KS. Mousallis were here before Mathenys.

L. I know he's told me he was here first.

KS. According to what, that's according to what I was told by them.

J. What is the last name?

U. He said he tried to resuscitate him.

KS. Mousalli. M-O-U ...

L. Yeah, but Mike was already here calling.

KS. S-A-L-L-I.

J. And they're to the north?

U. Yeah. And then Matheny, M-A-T-H-E-N-Y, is on the other side. And he was bringing blankets over. He came running across with blankets, right?

L. No.

U. Well that's what ...

L. Connie had her coat.

U. Oh. Well they thought it was a blanket. They saw stuff in his hands ...

L. Oh.

U. ... while he was trying to ..

J. Now when you were trying to back up, and then you said you saw Todd come out, and then he laid down, you had to jump back in the van and try to get out, that's when you got stuck? Was after you got back in?

U. The insurance guy's ... (inaudible) ... so ...

L. Well he told me noon.

J. Yup.

L. He told, he told me that ...

U. He just called and said he was running late.

L. Oh. Okay.

J. Oh ...

L. Oh, he, I thought you meant he's waiting here ...

U. No.

L. ... and I'm holding him up. And I thought ...

J. Oh no, he's ...

L. ... I can't be holding him up, I'm not even ...

- J. We're all here doing the same thing. Yeah. He has to wait his turn. Now going back to in the home that morning, when, and looking at, reviewing some of the stuff last night, I think I have most of the day's events. You talked about the towel that you were trying to launder that smelled like oil or fuel. Where was that towel at when you first discovered it and that it was smelly?
- L. It was on the laundry room floor. And I, um ... It was partly on a basket, and there was some clean clothes, um, and partly ... It's like I can remember getting mad, 'cause I thought why, why is it laying on top of other stuff?
- J. And then you tried to wash that?
- L. Yeah.
- J. And where's that towel at now? Could it still be in the washer?
- L. Um, either the washer or the dryer. I don't remember if I switched it. But after I ran it through once, then I stuck a full load of red clothes in to wash. So ...
- U. When you've got that many boys, you, you have plenty of laundry.
- J. The laundry never stops.
- U. Right.
- J. Yup. Now is the dryer electric?
- L. Yeah.
- J. And then you were downstairs prior to discovering the fire. Yesterday you talked about how that you were downstairs, and that ...
- L. Yeah, I was in the laundry room.
- J. And that you guys ... You were in the laundry room when you heard Todd start screaming?
- L. Yeah. Prior to that, I mean, I was back ... Oh, in the living room in the basement, there was a big huge game table, too. 'Cause I was folding laundry on that table.
- U. (inaudible) ... that big pool table.
- L. Yeah. I got that, but I forgot about the poker table.

J. Now you had said yesterday you guys had been arguing, that he had been yelling at you. And then the yelling turned to screaming. Was it he stopped yelling? Was there a pause?

L. Yeah, he just stopped yelling. And then, I don't know, just ... moments later ...

J. For how long? I mean, was it ... I mean, just ...

L. Just, just a couple of sentences, and then, and then ... and then a pause, and then ... a scream.

J. Could you understand anything that he was saying? I mean when he first started screaming. Was he yelling, "Fire," yelling, "Get out?" I mean, I mean, I know these are kind of meticulous. 'Cause what I'm looking at, trying to reconstruct ... You've been real helpful with where the fire was located. And I'm looking at timeframe as to how the fire grew from, you know, from wherever it started into what it did. And timeframe is an important factor.

L. He told me nobody else would ever have me.

J. But that obviously was part of his controlling, his nature of trying to control you.

U. Oh yeah.

L. (crying)

(unintelligible conversation)

J. Oh, here's some, looks like some napkins.

U. Napkins. It's better than ...

J. There we go. How long had you been downstairs doing laundry and stuff before you heard, one, the yelling stop, and him start screaming? 'Cause I know you said you'd been down and got the boys and did laundry, and been up and down a couple times. The last time you went down, about how long was it were you in the basement before the screaming and the fire was discovered?

U. About a half an hour.

L. I don't know. I folded ... I don't even remember what I exactly, folded laundry. I went down, I ... I don't know, I was just kind of puttering around down there, trying to avoid ... I used the bathroom. Um, I checked the laundry. I don't know, maybe ...

U. Twenty minutes?

L. Maybe around fifteen or twenty. I don't, I don't think it was a half-hour. I don't ...

J. And ...

U. If you used the bathroom and checked the laundry ... (inaudible)

J. Yeah. And then, and this would've been after you had been ... You had talked about you were reading ...

L. Right.

J. ... the book with the instructions for your son's medication?

L. Well, and then I took a nap. When I was reading that booklet, and ... I got Todd something to drink. And I went down, and ... I don't know, it may have been longer. I know I put some more Christmas decorations away, at some point down there.

J. Now if he's up moving around upstairs, can you hear him downstairs? I mean, I realize ...

L. Oh yeah.

J. ... it's a new house. You can hear ...

L. Yeah.

J. ... you know, the floor creaking, and ...

L. 'Cause we didn't have any ceiling in the living room yet. And I ... he was ...

U. In the family room, you mean.

L. Yeah.

J. Yup, the downstairs.

L. The basement.

J. Yup.

L. I'm sorry. Um, he was in our bedroom. I heard him use the bathroom. 'Cause I could hear the water up there.

J. When he was yelling at you while you were down there this last round, before the fire, could you tell if he was walking around? I mean was the voice changing like he was moving around upstairs? Or was he just kind of, you know, sitting in the recliner yelling?

L. I couldn't tell. I mean the doorway to the stairs was open. I know I had heard him kind of walking, um, kind of overhead of the laundry room. Maybe, maybe he was in that guest bathroom instead of our bedroom. I don't know.

J. But that's kind of above where the laundry and everything is downstairs?

L. Yeah, it's directly below.

J. Is there anything that you can think of in the area of the recliner, that part of the living room, that could start a fire? I know that there was a fire in the fireplace. In the corner where the recliner is sitting, is there anything else over there? I know we talked about the oil lamp on the half-wall. Is there lights in the corner? Is there anything plugged into those outlets?

U. You just had outlets over there, didn't ya?

L. We had outlets in the half-wall.

U. Yeah, he put plenty of outlets in all the way around.

L. Oh yeah, we made sure. 'Cause we've lived in some houses that did not have ... Oh gosh.

U. (inaudible)

L. Um ...

J. Nothing plugged in around that corner?

(inaudible conversation in background)

L. I don't remember if the lamp was over there still, or ... We had a lamp, a, just a floor lamp, and sometimes we had it over in that corner. I think it was over closer to the fireplace though.

J. Have you ever had any problems with the fireplace? Now it's a wood burning fireplace?

L. Yeah.

J. And is there a glass on the front, or the screen?

L. No. There's just a screen. You know, pulls.

J. Oh, okay. Yup.

L. We went to try and get glass for it, and I found out we had to special order 'cause it was a oddball size or something. And ...

U. (inaudible)

J. You ever had any problems with ... Now ... Well, let me back up a little bit. With the fireplace upstairs, is there a stone hearth or ceramic tile or something?

L. There was flashing still. He hadn't put the, um ... We had, in the, all right at the base of the stairs in the basement, there was a big huge linen closet. Um, right, there was a wall right here, and this, and, um, this was all just a linen closet. And under ... and there were blankets and sheets from ceiling to about knee-high. And then underneath was all the tile that we were gonna put in, um, on the floor in front of both fireplaces. But there was just metal flashing on the floor.

J. Okay. Just metal flashing where the hearth should go?

L. Yes.

J. And then no carpet on that area?

L. No.

J. Okay. And ...

L. The carpet in the basement was a couple feet out, but there was no fire in the basement.

J. Yup.

L. The fire was in the upstairs living room.

J. Yup. And then basically, did you have the same metal flashing around? So you haven't had any problems with logs rolling out of the fireplace? Nothing like that before?

L. Never a log rolling out, 'cause we had a nice grate in both of them. But we've had poppers every now and then. But not, I mean like if you don't close those screens sometimes, but nothing ...

J. How about over by the master bedroom? You said that when he was over there, there was a lot of fire there. Do you use any space heaters? Electric, portable heaters?

L. We used to. We used to have, ah, kerosene heaters up there on the floor when we were, you know, first working on it and that. Um.

J. Oh, when you were building?

L. Yeah.

U. But you didn't have it now.

L. But we didn't have ... Ah, they're in the shed. Or in the semi. One of the two. I mean we didn't ...

J. How long's it been since you used a kerosene heater in there?

L. Oh, since last winter.

J. So that was more during the building stages?

L. Yeah. Well, and, and last year, too. He hadn't blown insulation into the attic, so it didn't heat as good. So we used, you know, the space heaters. And we had a couple ceramic space heaters. In fact, we still kept 'em. In our bedroom, there was a tall ceramic stand heater, um, that would, you know, turn. And that was right inside our bedroom door. And then one in the bathroom, too. Just a small square one. 'Cause I liked it really warm when I took a shower.

U. (inaudible) ... doesn't like to be cold ... (inaudible)

J. It was yesterday she was standing out here just shaking, and ... So I said, "I think we need to sit in the car."

U. Well she's been shaking quite a bit anyway.

J. Yeah. Well it was cold and the wind was blowing ...

U. Hmm mm.

J. ... and we were out for a while. Have you had any ... Let's see, some of these here we've already done. Do you know who it was that actually called 911? It was, obviously, one of the neighbors.

- L. One of the Mathenys, I'm sure. Those are the only people I remember seeing. When I was laying on Todd, that's when Mr. Mousalli came up. And he announced something about being a trained medic. And he told me he told me his name, but I don't remember hearing. I just remember hearing that I'm a trained medic. And then ...
- U. He's a dentist in Dowagiac.
- L. No, Decatur.
- U. Or Decatur.
- J. Oh, Decatur. Now as far as lights on upstairs, what lights would've been on?
- L. I don't think there should've been any lights on. It was ...
- U. Yeah, it was the daytime.
- L. ... the middle of the day. We tried to be pretty good about ... He's always harping at the kids, "When you leave the room ..."
- U. Turn the light off.
- J. Yup. General condition of the structure? Basically, everything was ...
- L. It was beautiful.
- J. ... three years old?
- L. It was just gorgeous.
- J. No ... You didn't smell any odors, nothing unusual?
- L. Well I did. I told him the house stunk. And I asked him what that smell was.
- J. When did you tell him that?
- L. Um, in the morning sometime. And, ah, when he told me about the towel in the laundry room, to wash that. 'Cause, um, at some point, he had bled that furnace through, and he said he wiped up ...
- J. And I think you said that the furnace, he did that on Saturday?
- L. Yeah.
- J. So Todd told you that the towel was down there?

L. Yeah.

J. Okay.

U. Didn't Trenton smell something?

L. The boys were all gone.

J. Now did you smell ... Well what was it? You said it stunk; what did it smell like to you?

L. It just smelled like oil or gas, or something.

J. Now, could you smell it ...

L. (unintelligible)

J. ... upstairs?

L. Yeah. But not as much upstairs. More downstairs.

J. And then ...

L. So I figured that made sense, that if I just washed the dang towel, that ... problem solved.

J. And then electricity, of course, was on at the time. You don't ...

L. Ah ...

J. ... have any gas?

L. Mm mm, no.

J. And now, have you had any problems with any of the wiring since you built the house? Tripping breakers? Plugs that you plug in and nothing happens?

L. No. He made sure everything was on plenty of circuits. That's why he hooked up a different circuit box for all the outside electricity for the horses, so that ... 'cause he said you can only put so much on a circuit, and you can only put so many circuits in a box.

J. Hmm mm.

L. And so he didn't want to have any of those kind of problems. We've had that where you can't run the microwave in the kitchen and the blow dryer in the bathroom at the same time, so ...

(inaudible conversation in background)

L. ... he was really, really good about that.

J. Problems ...

L. This pantry had tons and tons of storage stuff in it, too. It just had boxes of paperwork and clothes that I was supposed to sort out for Goodwill, and groceries. We had a pantry shelf, and there was lots of wood trim and, um, some wallboard, and ... you know.

J. Alright. How about problems? You said the furnace, that every now and then, you have to bleed the lines because they get air in it.

L. Yeah.

J. Um ...

L. I'm not sure if it was 'cause of the air. I know that Todd had said that that might have been one of the problems. 'Cause the way the, the copper tubing is supposed to come down inside of the tank, and he said that the guy was a real ding-a-ling that did it the first time around. And so, somebody from Bangor. So he had somebody else come out and ... But I have ... One winter, we had them come out like six times just, just, um, from Fleetwoods. And then he had to call Fields a couple of times, and then he figured it out himself how to ...

J. And I take it ... You say it's Fields?

L. Yes.

J. Is that a heating company here in ...

L. Yeah, it's right here in Lawrence. Fields Plumbing and Heating.

U. Fields Plumbing and Heating. It's right here in Lawrence.

J. When ... Now as far as you know, Saturday, he said he had to bleed the furnace?

L. Yeah.

J. About how often this year, we'll say this winter ...

- L. We haven't used the heat hardly at all this winter. Um, we had ...
- U. (inaudible) ... fireplaces.
- L. Yeah. And, and it's been so warm. So it doesn't kick on much. And with him putting the insulation in the attic this ... I don't even remember whether it was this spring or summer, but it just ...
- J. And normally, with the furnace, if you have a problem with it, it quits working?
- L. No, it, it would blow cold air.
- J. Okay.
- L. Yeah, I knew right away when something was amiss, 'cause it was ...
- U. Cold. She's cold anyways.
- L. Todd ... (unintelligible)
- J. Okay. Portable heaters ... we already did that. Now, when you were using the kerosene heaters in the house, would you refuel them inside or outside?
- L. Inside. We had a siphon thing.
- J. Oh, one of the plastic tube with a squeeze bulb?
- L. (inaudible) ... And you can look in the shed, if you like. They might be in there. They're the kind that have the metal round base. I think one of 'em was rusted off, so we threw that one away. Not the heater, but the base.
- J. Any problems with the water heater?
- L. Never. Except Cory used too much hot water.
- J. Now the candles burning ... We talked about the small oil lamps on the half-wall, and then the candle that was on the bar ...
- L. Bar.
- J. And that would've been it?
- L. Yeah.
- J. How about smokers?

L. No. Not ever in the house. My mom can't even smoke in our house.

U. Yeah, I got banished to the yard.

(unintelligible conversation in background)

J. Now who's the smoker? Is Todd a smoker?

L. Ah, no, never really. He just, occasionally, if he went hunting with all the guys, he'd have a ...

U. (unintelligible)

L. Oh what do you call it? A celebratory cigar or something. But no.

J. You don't think smoking's a cause of the fire?

L. No, definitely not. We don't even own any ashtrays.

J. Now upstairs, would the inside doors, bedroom doors, would they have been open or closed?

L. Um, I keep the bedroom doors closed all the time.

J. Now is that the master bedroom?

L. Master bedroom. The office door, I try to keep it closed most of the time. Um ... the guest bathroom always open. The basement door always open. Unless the dogs are being naughty and won't listen to me and stay downstairs. And the pantry door, always closed.

J. Now is there a stair wall, or a doorway for the stairs going up to the loft? Or is that just an open stairwell?

L. Just an open stairwell.

J. Now we talked about smoke detectors. How many would you say there were? We ended up with ... What'd we end up with, four or five, at least, on the list?

L. That seems about right.

J. Somewhere in my notes here I've got ...

U. Were they all working?

J. The master bedroom ...

- L. (inaudible) ... I think so. The ones that were hooked up, I'm pretty sure were all working.
- J. Yup. That was master bedroom, office, pantry, the ...
- L. But I didn't hear it.
- J. That's what, that was gonna be my next question. When did you first hear a smoke detector?
- L. Um, when I, I think it was when I jumped back out of the van. No, maybe it was when I was running out the door. I don't remember hearing one at all until I was outside of the house. At some point, I was outside the house and I heard that kind of a noise. But ...
- J. Now did you have a smoke, or a CO, a carbon monoxide?
- L. Yeah. ...
- J. Where was that one at?
- L. In the basement. That was the one in the utility room, near the furnace.
- J. Was that smoke and CO?
- L. Everything. That was an expensive one.
- J. Have any problems with any of the appliances not working? Stove, refrigerator, anything?
- L. Well we just had a service person from Benton Harbor or St. Joe come out, 'cause there was a problem with the washer dial; there was a problem with the dryer, wasn't working at all; the microwave, we were, we blew a fuse and so they came out and did all three appliances all the same day. Like November or December. So everything was all ... you know, they serviced 'em, and everything was just perfect.
- J. And what was wrong with the dryer?
- L. Um, it wouldn't turn. The ...
- U. Drum.
- L. Thank you. Wouldn't ... Yeah.
- J. The motor, motor would run and it wouldn't tumble?

L. Right. And the water heater, Todd had just, um ... We did have a problem with the water heater. He had to replace one of the elements. Ah, the bottom element. He said maybe he should've replaced the top element too, but he'd wait on that. But he had flushed the water heater. I guess you're supposed to do that sometimes, so ...

J. Yeah, they build up. With the minerals in hard water, they build up sludge and they burn out, and they'll ...

L. Yeah.

J. ... go through three or four bottoms to a top.

L. Yeah. He said it was really a lot of sludge, 'cause he hadn't thought of flushing it in a while. So he ... It, it was working fine until he flushed it, and when he flushed it and it got filled back up, then it wasn't working. So he replaced that.

J. And now no problems with any of these items since the repair?

L. Nope.

J. You hadn't been doing any finishing, refinishing, woodworking up in the living room area there, where the fire was at?

L. No, but there were lots of ... I work at a, um, company that makes, um, caulking and sealants, and, you, adhesives, and we had, um, several tubes of that different places around the house. Um, I know in the, behind the fireplace in the main floor, there was probably a couple of cases of that stuff. Not from my work, but from, um, the hardware store. 'Cause Todd had used that to put, to glue the, um, tongue and groove.

J. Hmm mm.

L. All the, um ... Todd was really picky about no squeaky stairs. So every stair tread ...

J. Hmm mm.

L. ... was glued down first and then screwed down. And, and all the drywall was also glued first and then screwed. And all the OSB on the floor was all glued and screwed. So, you know, we had a lot of, um ... And, you know, every now and then, we'll make a batch that gets packed wrong or something, so they tell ya you can just take it home. And Todd does handiwork for other people, so I figured it'd always come in handy someplace. So I'd just bring him home buckets of it, and ... buckets of tubes ... 'Cause I, 'cause I couldn't carry a five-gallon bucket of that stuff.

J. Yeah. Now as far as ...

L. (unintelligible)

J. ... any flammable liquids stored inside, inside the house ... Any gasoline, kerosene? I think you mentioned that with the oil lamps, you had some lamp oil?

L. Yeah.

J. Where would that have been stored at?

L. Um, underneath the sink in the kitchen. Um, occasionally, in our bedroom, Todd would leave the bottle on the nightstand or by the nightstand, you know, if he had filled it up. Um ... the, in the furnace room, um, when he'd bleed it out, he didn't always take it out and dump it back into the tank. Sometimes there'd be a two-liter bottle where he had, you know, done that.

J. But that would be left in the ...

L. Basement ...

J. ... furnace room?

L. ... furnace room, yeah. Um ...

J. Now when he bleeds it out normally, is that it? He just bleeds it into a bottle or something?

L. Yup.

J. And, of course, it always spills a little bit.

L. Always.

J. The nature, the nature of oil.

L. He's ruined so many of my good towels that way. The washcloths ...

U. They always just grab the first rag.

L. He never could just grab a rag.

U. Grab the first one they see, of course.

U. That's not just Todd. Excuse me, sir, but it's all men.

J. Oh.

L. I didn't want to say men.

U. I did. It was males.

J. Well ...

L. I'd reach for paper towels or something you ...

U. Yeah.

L. ... can throw away.

U. Or one of their work shirts we don't care about.

L. Or something you want to get rid of of their closet.

U. Exactly.

J. No conflicts with any neighbors? I know you ...

L. Oh no.

J. ... and Todd had been, had been going through quite a time, but no problems with neighbors or family members?

L. No.

J. Anybody make any threats to you? I mean other ...

L. No.

J. ... other than the stuff we talked about yesterday with Todd?

L. No.

J. Nobody suspicious hanging around the neighborhood?

L. No.

J. If it turns out that the fire cause wasn't accidental, who'd have the best opportunity to light it?

L. What do you mean if it was accidental?

J. If it was not, was not an accidental fire.

L. Todd and I were the only ones home.

J. Okay. That's just the two of you. Can you think of anybody that would say that you lit the fire?

L. No. I mean ... Everybody liked me.

U. When his mother realizes it's under suspicion, she'll say it was Linda.

L. But I get along so well with ... (inaudible)

U. I know you get along with her and she's nice to you, but I also know that the sun rose and set in Todd.

L. Yeah, he was ... (unintelligible) ... boy.

U. And she bailed him out of trouble every time he got in trouble. And she's the one that loaned him the money to bail himself out every time.

L. That's enough, Mom.

U. I'm sorry.

J. What is her name?

L. Sandy.

J. And what's her add, where does she live at?

L. Um, 7522 Currier ...

J. Currier?

U. C-U-R-R-I-E-R. Drive. It's in, ah ...

L. Portage.

U. Hart ... Port Grand or Hart ... (unintelligible)

L. Hart, Hart ... I don't know, Hartland. It's a senior complex. But that's her address.

J. Oh.

L. And it's in Portage. And, um, her phone number is 269-323-0115.

J. Was she aware of the problems and stuff that you and Todd had been having?

L. No.

U. No.

J. No?

U. I tried to tell her, but my daughter would not let me.

J. Okay.

U. And I, I tried that years ago ... (inaudible)

J. But you're fully aware of their issues and ...

U. I'm fully aware of it. Her sister's fully aware of it. Her stepfather's fully aware of it. I have a letter ...

L. (to her mother) You got another vehicle?

U. I have ...

L. You got another vehicle?

U. Yes.

L. Just be nice.

U. Okay.

L. My family was aware that I was gonna leave.

U. (unintelligible)

L. I told you yesterday that I was thinking about going to my sister's.

KS. I wasn't aware she was ... (unintelligible)

J. Right. And then ...

U. And we were thanking God that she finally got brains in her head.

J. See, and that's the thing, is that number one, any time you have a fire loss that's this big, with this much damage, the insurance company is going to do a full investigation.

L. I don't think we had insurance though. Todd told me that he didn't pay the insurance, and it was due in December.

J. The, and now is that the homeowner's?

L. Yes. And ...

U. But they said they got, it wasn't ...

L. They have to investigate every, everything anyways, but I don't think that ... See, we had gotten really behind on our bills and our mortgage, and we were in foreclosure over this summer. And we borrowed against the life insurance, and Todd borrowed 25,000 dollars from his sister overseas to buy some gloves for his business. And ...

U. That's your husband.

L. ... he went out and, and sold the gloves real fast. He had a lot of customers waiting, and he made enough money to get us out of foreclosure. And then he continued selling those gloves and everything, and ... I don't know where all that money went. I know he bought gloves initially, but I don't know where all the money went that he made from selling the gloves. Or if he just wasn't managing it very good, because we're now again behind on our mortgage. The utilities were all caught up and the, you know, insurances and everything. Except for I thought the house insurance was paid and he told me it was due December 1st, and he told me that we don't have mortgage insurance any more. And he told me that we were gonna lose the house, and he said that, you know, we should just think about selling the house before we lose it. So there were a lot of financial pressures on him, too. And ... You know, I told him I would help pay the bills. I would continue, you know, the insurance on him, and all of us and everything. And if we could just work things out, you know, with the separation for a little while; that was fine. But, you know, I was filing for divorce. And I said, you know, it's, it takes months, so if we get things worked out before then, then, you know ...

J. And so the financial aspects, and then he basically controlled the money, I think is what you told me yesterday. So that you may want to get into the bank accounts and see what money came in, what money went and where it went. 'Cause you borrowed some ...

L. I'm not on his checking account.

U. She has to have a death certificate first, because she is not on his account.

J. Oh, she's not on the account?

U. No.

J. Oh, okay.

L. I'm on, I'm on the small account, but he's on the, the business account, and so is his mom. Just him and his mom.

J. Then what's the name of his business?

L. Search and Supply. And I mean he had great customers, and all of his customers loved him and, you know, everything. If, but he would only go to work, I mean Kate even used to come to the house all the time, and he would only go to work a couple days a week. If he would've just gone out and worked every day and ... you know, we had talked ...

KS. (inaudible)

L. We, we had talked, um

J. Yeah, that's Len.

L. ... about him getting another job. And, um, that's when he told me ... 'cause a friend of mine works at the new bio diesel plant up in Bangor, and she was telling me how great of jobs they've got open. And I asked Todd if that'd be something he'd be interested in, 'cause he's got a college degree and, you know, he, he could've done that supervisor job and he would've started out at like seventeen or eighteen dollars an hour. And I said, "And you only work a couple days a week, you could do your business, too. And do this. And, you know, then we would be alright." And he said he couldn't go and apply for that because he had just gone out with his friend, ah, and smoked some weed. And that's what Jeff wanted me to, you know ...

J. Anything else that you can think of, that we haven't covered?

L. I guess I ...

J. We've been through a lot. And that's the thing, and anytime, like I said, with the insurance company basically, they're gonna do, we're gonna do a full investigation, and that's why I'm gonna end up with an electrical engineer, mechanical engineer, going through the system and appliances to try to figure out exactly what happened with the cause of the fire. And with the insurance nowadays, it's almost automatic. Anything more than, you know, four, five, six

thousand dollars in loss, they're looking. 'Cause one of the things that we look at too is product liability issues. Is there an appliance failure? Or, you know, a workmanship failure? You know, you just pay somebody to fix an appliance and three days later, it's on fire. So we look at a lot of those general things. So for us to do the full investigation is normal. And I know that apparently ... I talked with Scott Leroy from the State Police to make sure it was okay that I came in here ... he's working with the local fire department. And anytime you have a fire that someone's injured or that there's a death involved, as in this case, they're going to do the full investigation.

U. Right.

J. That's, and, you know, if they didn't, then they'd be remiss in their duties. So that, that's, you know, the big thing there. If you think of anything you think that might be helpful, you've got my card, give me a call. I'm gonna be in town, out of town. My plan is, I'm waiting for a couple phone calls. In fact, that's the fire chief has ... apparently, there's one of the local farmers has a big excavator that we can get Monday. Because in order to go in and work, we're gonna have to pull some of that top floor and stuff off so that it doesn't flop on us while we're in there working.

L. (inaudible)

J. But my plan is, at this point, if I can get everything lined up, is to be here by 9:00 Monday morning, and when I leave Monday afternoon, we'll be completely done with the scene. So then I'll be out of your hair at least.

L. You're not in my hair. I don't ...

U. Well you've got my numbers too so you can ...

J. Yup.

U. ... get a hold of her through me.

J. Yup, and like I said, if I call ... That's why I talked with Kim the other day and that's what she said, if something happens you can't get a hold of Linda, give us a call. But like I said, with your permission slip and all that, that stuff there ... Oh, you know what I don't have, I don't have Mom's name.

L. (inaudible) ... I'm sure I'll be staying with Kate for the week.

U. Martee Bakhuyzen. B-A-K-H-U-Y-Z-E-N. And that's Martee with M-A-R-T-E-E.

J. T-E-E. And it's B-H-A ...

U. B-A-K-H-U-Y-Z-E-N.

J. B-A-K ... Kind of like Bakhoizen?

U. Yeah.

L. Buckheizen.

J. Buckheizen. How about a phone number for you?

U. 3 ... Ah, 269-377-9826.

J. Outstanding.

L. Um ... I know that Todd's mom can confirm this, that if you had to ask her, but last year, I had asked her to please not loan Todd any more money, that it just kept him from going out and, you know, us being self-sufficient. And he owes her a great ... I owe her a great sum of money. So when he asked her this last time to borrow money, she sent him in the direction of his sister, 'cause she didn't have any more money to loan him. I think that we owe Sandy several thousand dollars. And, um ...

U. But you don't know how much, 'cause he never told you how much.

L. Sandy mentioned it once, and it was pretty astronomical.

J. How much are you talking about?

L. I think it was 30,000 dollars.

J. And then he's into his sister for 25?

L. And his brother for five. And, um, that was one of the things that he'd mentioned recently, that between the two of us life insurance policies, we might just have enough to take care of everybody. But, you know, Todd has been depressed off and on, but he refused to take any medication since, um, we lived on the other side of Lawrence, because our insurance company, um, dropped his prescription insurance because, Todd said it was because he was on anti-depressants and they felt he was, you know ... So he refused to take any anti-depressants ever again. He got mad at me when he found out that I went on some recently. Asked me what the heck kind of stress did I have? I didn't owe anybody any money; it was him that ... So ... You know, his mom and I have talked about him being depressed, you know, off and on.

- J. Now with ... I'm still ... What I'm still looking at, you know, the timeframe on the fire. And now, and the way you describe it, the chair was on fire, and then the, over by the bedroom was on fire, with him in that area of the fire. He was obviously on fire. Is there anything up there that could start the fire?
- L. The fireplace was the only thing I could think of. But it wasn't ... I ran up almost to the fireplace, and fire came from our bedroom direction, towards me, towards the fireplace. So it wasn't the fireplace. I know that it wasn't the fireplace.
- J. It wasn't fire coming out of the fireplace, or the pipes, or along the ceiling, or anything? It was ...
- L. No. It ...
- J. It was in the room?
- L. I came from the basement; the pipes are there, in that wall. And ...
- U. You don't know what he was doing up there either.
- J. How about fuel? You said you could smell the oil and the fuel. Was, and you said it wasn't as strong upstairs. Could he have had fuel on him?
- L. I took him juice. I would've smelled it.
- J. And then when you took him the juice, he was sitting in the recliner?
- L. Yeah.
- J. 'Cause what I'm looking at, and you know, from the fire investigation, is how do we get that much fire that fast? In the middle of the afternoon, with two able-bodied adults that were home?
- L. Exactly.
- J. You know, the smoke detectors you didn't hear 'til you got outside. Maybe, with everything going on, you just didn't notice 'til you were out there. But yeah, and that's an issue. Is there's a lot of fire very fast.
- L. I know. I know exactly what it all looks like. It doesn't make any sense whatsoever. It's just ...
- J. What was he wearing Saturday? Do you remember?
- L. Sweatpants.

- J. Was he wearing the same clothes Saturday that he wore Sunday?
- L. Oh. Sunday he was wearing sweatpants. I don't remember what he was wearing Saturday.
- J. Sunday he had sweatpants on.
- L. Hmm mm.
- J. What kind of shirt did he have on?
- L. I don't remember if he had a shirt on.
- J. Okay. And would he have, would it be normal for him if he wore clothes ... Well let's say Saturday when he was bleeding the furnace, if he had gotten oil on him, would he have worn those same clothes all night ... (inaudible)
- L. No.
- U. No.
- J. He was more, a little neater than that?
- L. He was a pretty boy.
- U. This, this man ...
- L. If he, well if he spilled a ...
- U. ... is very neat.
- L. ... tiny bit on him, I mean, yes.
- U. Very neat.
- L. But not a lot.
- U. Very well groomed.
- U. Yup.
- L. But he was a slob around the house, Mom.
- U. Yeah.

U. But he was the nicest young man you could ever hope to meet. Everybody loved him when they met him.

L. Well he coached so many kids around town, that so many parents just ...

U. But they didn't know the other side of him.

J. Now has he had any problems with his anger, as far as fighting or anything before ...

L. He ...

J. ... you guys got married? I mean just on the street, or running with his buddies?

L. He had, um, um, an assault on his record. But he was like eighteen or so. Um, he had a drunk driving. I had to go to counseling with him. You know, 'cause they require you to bring a person with you.

J. Oh. Okay.

L. Um, he had a lot of anger issues, but he wouldn't ever go and see somebody about it.

J. What kind of anger issues?

L. He had a temper. He had a real bad temper. And, you know, he was, he said that he never hit me, but he could bruise me without his fists. I mean he hit me with a fishing reel one time.

U. Yup. I remember.

L. Um ...

U. Pulled your hair.

L. Horse bit.

U. Kicked you. He hung a noose in the barn one time for her. So that when she walked in at night, she'd bump into it.

J. And then the verbal in this last round's been going on pretty steadily. That's what you ...

L. The, the, the verbal has always been there. Just more and more ... I mean I, I talked to my lawyer about everything, you know, a few times. I mean, over the past couple years, we, I didn't just start talking about divorce just a couple months ago. Last year, Todd told me to go see a lawyer; he wanted a divorce. And then we'd work things out. And ...

U. And like I said, she loved him and she'd take his apologies and, and the promises, and ...

L. He'd change for a while. I mean ...

J. But then ultimately, it would end up back.

U. (inaudible) ... Thanksgiving, she had the imprint of her cell phone on her stomach where he threw it at her.

L. I was getting dressed in the bathroom and ...

J. Now ...

L. ... somebody from work had called to see about getting some concert tickets that I had won. And he got mad because a man called my cell phone. And the police came. I think I ...

J. Yeah.

L. ... told you that.

J. You had said ... Yeah, you had talked about the fact that you'd had the one complaint, but you didn't go into details. That's about the time you had to scoot yesterday.

L. Sorry.

J. Is he capable of lighting himself on fire? Or of trying to burn the house and getting caught in it? I mean, has he ever said he was gonna ...

L. I ...

J. ... burn the house to get rid of it?

L. No. I ... I mean, the kids were everything to him. I just can't imagine that, you know, that he would, knowing we don't have insurance ... And, you know, I mean, his sister was supposed to raise the kids, so I don't know. I keep going over this in my mind and trying to figure it out, and the only thing I can figure is if we were both supposed to go. I mean he told me a long time ago, like

around Thanksgiving time, that he'd been ... You know, he, he reads the Bible a lot, and he told me this, um, week that he couldn't divorce me, because if a man divorces a woman and she gets, even if she gets remarried or sees someone else or whatever, that man causes her to commit adultery, then that man is equally responsible for that sin, and ... So he couldn't divorce me; I had to divorce him in order for it to be right with the Lord. And he told me, um, around Thanksgiving time ... Well, it must've been earlier in November, when I went to the lawyer, it really scared me then, because he had said that he was just waiting for a sign from God to see which one of us was supposed to go.

U. And as soon as he found out, that would be the end of it.

L. So that's what ...

U. She was the one that was ...

L. ... was my last ...

U. That house

L. ... scare.

U. ... was supposed to go up in flames, and her with it. He accidentally got in it.

L. (inaudible)

J. You didn't light the fire inside? Because it certainly would ... As bad as that sounds ...

U. I, I know.

J. It's a terrible thing that Todd is dead, but ...

U. The first thing that ...

J. ... he is now resolved ...

L. He's the one that's gone and I'm here, and I'm ...

U. And that's just what he wouldn't want.

J. And it's resolved a lot of your problems. You know, kind of a terrible thing to say, but with him gone, the abuse stops, you're not being harassed.

L. This is the beginning of my problems now. I mean, that stuff I could live with. I mean, I've lived with that stuff.

U. And she lived with it because she cared about her boys, and she wanted them to be old enough to decide where they wanted to live before she got a divorce.

J. Hmm mm.

U. That's one of the things that's kept her from getting a divorce.

L. I didn't want ... And Todd and I talked about this, and he said, "Don't take my kids." And I told the boys, I had a talk with my oldest son a couple weeks ago, and I said, you know, "I'm gonna go and live with Aunt Kim for a while, but you boys are staying here." 'Cause when we moved here, we decided those boys were staying in the same school for ...

J. Hmm mm.

L. I moved around a lot. And ...

U. Yup.

L. ... Todd didn't. He got the benefit of being in the same place forever. And ...

J. Now he's never had any of the abusive behavior, anger towards the boys?

L. Just, he'll ...

U. Just the girls.

L. ... scream. But my daughters, yes.

U. He beat up her oldest daughter.

L. This summer.

J. Now is that Britney?

L. Ashley.

U. Ashley.

J. Oh, Ashley. I don't know Ashley.

U. This last summer.

J. 'Cause I asked Britney about that when she drew my diagram ... and that yesterday. And she kind of, actually, she kind of looked at me funny. But we ask funny questions. That's, that's, you know, part of the job. Was that when she did the master bedroom, she did "Mom" and "Todd."

U. Hmm mm.

L. Hmm ...

J. You know? And I said obviously, this is ...

U. He was, he was not ... (inaudible)

J. This is Mom and Todd, so although he is your step-dad, you don't call him dad?

U. No.

J. And she had, I think she was kind of startled by that question.

U. And their grandma Sandy does not call them her grandchildren either.

L. Yes, she does.

KS. (inaudible)

L. Yes, she does. She thinks of those girls ... Just ... Yeah ... (inaudible)

U. That's not what I get from them.

J. Now has Britney had any issues with him?

L. Yes. Arguments, but ...

J. I mean as far as, you know ... No physical?

L. No physical ... Well ... I mean he's, he's gone overboard on spanking her a couple times, when she was younger. But, um, you know, nothing terribly ... I mean it was a spanking, and she was fighting with him, and so he pushed her back onto the bed. But, you know, not ...

J. Now has he ever been married before?

L. No.

J. This is the first for him?

L. Yes.

J. First for you?

L. No. Second for me. My daughters are from my first marriage.

J. Oh, that ... Yeah, that's right. Duh.

L. And our oldest son is actually my brother's child. We, we had custody of him since he was two years old. Three pry.

J. And then which son is that? That's ...

L. Cory.

U. That's Cory.

J. Cory.

U. That's my son's boy.

L. And he is seventeen, so we've had him for fourteen years.

U. He's your son.

L. That's right.

J. Anything else that you can think of? I realize this is difficult, but trying to put the thing in ... And what I'm looking at now is wiring, plumbing, furnace ... and trying to put together to come up with a logical explanation of how we got that much fire that fast in the living room. Where he's, basically, upstairs and ... You know, and like you had said, the medication he was on was antibiotics and stuff for an ear infection. Would he have been drinking that day at all? Would he have any alcohol in his system?

L. I don't think so.

U. Could've had marijuana in it.

L. I already told him about that. But that would've been a while ago, so ...

U. You said you don't know for sure.

L. Well, it should've been.

U. It'll come up on the autopsy.

L. Yeah. They just picked up his friend for drunk driving. So he wouldn't get in trouble in an accident.

J. I think I have everything I need. I've got other work I'm gonna do, and then, I'm gonna turn you over to the next guy that's gonna ask you a whole bunch of stupid questions about this again. Let me, let me turn this thing off.

U. He'll just take over your seat.

J. Yeah. It is now 12:39, and I can stop the recording.

End of interview; transcribed 1/12/07 — sts.

This transcript was prepared to the best of the transcriber's ability to discern what was being said and is, for the most part, verbatim. Occasionally, for clarity, stammering/stuttering is not included in the text.